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Unspeakable Rich Mercy: Text and Audience in Three Puritan Sermons : John Cotton's the Covenant of God's Free Grace, Thomas Hooker's the Christian's Two Chiefe Lessons, and Thomas Shepard's the Saint's Jewel

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"UNSPEAKABLE RICH MERCY": TEXT AND AUDIENCE
IN THREE PURITAN SERMONS: JOHN COTTON'S THE COVENANT
OF GOD'S FREE GRACE, THOMAS HOOKER'S THE CHRISTIAN'S TWO
CHIEFE LESSONS, AND THOMAS SHEPARD'S THE SAINT'S JEWEL

by

Parley Ann Boswell

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PREFACE

I chose to study Puritan sermons for several reasons. As a student of literature and history, I am fascinated by the power of religious language and the significance of the sermon experience in early New England culture. My own reading of scholarship on the colonial Puritan community has indicated that preaching was at the very heart of the Puritan faith, and that each individual who consented to be part of a Puritan community acknowledged that the words he heard from the pulpit bound him most fundamentally to God's Word. In order for me to understand this most significant means of expression of the Puritan faith, I chose to consider the sermons as they were conceived by those who delivered them and those who heard them: as individual oral presentations.

We are three hundred and fifty years removed from the Puritan community of New England. It is impossible for us to know exactly how a preacher sounded, or how his words affected any of his listeners. It is possible, however, to identify certain patterns, tensions, and strategies in the published texts of these oral presentations which we, with our own experiences as listeners and readers, will recognize. By remembering that each text represents an oral delivery, and by reading each text accordingly, we are able to understand some of the needs, fears,

and hopes which concerned a people who seem very far removed from us indeed, a people who chose to lead their daily lives according to the Bible, and who were influenced, on an almost daily basis, by the controlled, yet passionate language of their Calvinist preachers.

In the spirit of the Puritan preachers about whom I have written, I have composed my study according to a three-part scheme, by choosing to consider three sermons. In all three sermons, the preachers and their listeners are searching for the means and the words with which to express their faith. My readings of The Covenant of Gods' Free Grace, The Christians' Two Chiefe Lessons, and The Saint's Jewel represent my own search as well. By allowing these English preachers to lead me on a journey through their powerful, graceful, and passionate words, I can begin to understand their relationship--and their legacy--to the powerful, graceful, and passionate language of later American literature.

VITA

The author, Parley Ann Boswell, was born 3 September, 1953, in Chicago Heights, Illinois, to Arlie O. and Parley Dabney Boswell. She attended public school in Harrisburg, Illinois, and graduated from Rich Township High School, Central Campus, Olympia Fields, Illinois. In 1971, Ms. Boswell entered the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, where she was graduated cum laude in 1975 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and American History. She received a Master of Arts degree in American History from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, in 1977.

Between 1977 and 1981, Ms. Boswell worked as an editorial assistant for a Buffalo, New York metropolitan magazine, and she taught English and History at Amherst Central Senior High School, Amherst, New York. During 1979, she also taught courses in the Women's Studies College at the State University of New York at Buffalo.

Ms. Boswell entered the Doctoral program in English at Loyola University of Chicago in June, 1981, where she held teaching assistantships from 1981 to 1984. During 1983, she also administered the English Department Writing Center, and was a student representative to the Ph.D. Council of Loyola University.

Under the supervision of Professor James E. Rocks, Ms. Boswell began her dissertation research in 1984, as an Arthur J. Schmitt Fellow. In addition to her dissertation research, Ms.

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Ms. Boswell was awarded an instructorship from the English Department at Loyola during the 1985-86 academic year. During 1986-87, she taught English as an adjunct instructor in the Humanities Department, Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago.

Ms. Boswell is a member of several honorary organizations, including Phi Alpha Theta, the National History Honor Society, and Alpha Sigma Nu, National Jesuit Honor Society. She was a University of Illinois James Scholar between 1971 and 1975, and in 1983, she was one of the winners of the Stanley Clayes Competition in Scholarly Writing at Loyola University of Chicago. She is also an active member of professional associations, including the Modern Language Association, the American Historical Association, and the American Culture Association.

In August, 1987, Ms. Boswell will begin teaching American Literature as an assistant professor of English at Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, Illinois, where she will also continue her research and scholarship in Early American Literature and History.

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CHAPTER I

"To Pierce the Minds": Form, Content, and Textual Significance of the Colonial Puritan Sermon

When Puritan minister Thomas Shepard and members of his congregation sailed from their native England for Massachusetts in 1635, they endured a dangerous, terrifying ocean voyage. Shepard was to recount the journey in his autobiographical notes years later, where he attributed their safe arrival in New England to the "unspeakable rich mercy" of the Lord (God's Plot 60). Characteristic of a Puritan preacher in this description, Shepard acknowledged no "speakable" human language with which to describe God's providence. Yet his autobiography itself testifies to another significant characteristic of a Puritan preacher: Shepard spent his life crafting human language into sermons, always designed to guide, comfort and instruct his congregation on the ways of the Lord.

In England and New England, the Puritan sermon served as the primary lifeline between preacher, community and personal faith. Particularly in New England, where printed material was sometimes scarce, sermons functioned as a common denominator which allowed literate and illiterate alike to participate in their religion. Preached on a daily basis, sermons brought the Puritan faith to life as ministers transformed Biblical passages into useful lessons for their listeners. The language was simple, the reasoning straightforward, and the lessons intended to help the

listeners to live in this world.

For all their simplicity and utilitarianism, the texts of these sermons were closely crafted and scrupulously documented. The preachers who designed the sermons came to New England with all the skills of Cambridge University Masters. They were proficient in Greek, Latin and Hebrew, and they were familiar with classical literature. But they were above all Puritans, and it was their Puritan faith and training which dictated simplicity of expression. Their calling as teachers and spokesmen for their New England communities demanded that they tailor their sermons to reflect a thorough command of scripture and doctrine, and, at the same time, demanded that they always speak and write with the needs of their colonial congregations in mind. The sermons of those preachers who could master such a dual purpose were often published. The three most published preachers of first-generation New England were John Cotton, Thomas Hooker, and, the minister who could "find not words," Thomas Shepard (God's Plot 60).

Cotton, Hooker and Shepard were distinguished clergymen before they settled in New England, and they were all renowned enough that many of the members of their English congregations followed them to the colony.¹ Those laymen who did not know their pastors in New England were at least familiar with the

¹Individual bibliographies on Cotton, Hooker and Shepard can be found in chapters two, three, and four of this study, respectively.

tenets of the faith and with the form of the sermons that these preachers delivered.

The Puritans preachers and teachers taught according to the doctrine of John Calvin, the French theologian and reformer, who had outlined the tenets of their faith in the Institutes of the Christian Religion, first published in 1536. All faithful Puritans believed that God was completely, absolutely powerful and that man was completely, absolutely depraved. When Adam had chosen to break his covenant with God by disobeying God's laws, all of Adam's descendants--all mortals--were from that time born damned in the eyes of God, and were destined, indeed predestined, to go to hell. God had stripped man of his "wisdom, righteousness, power," and he lived in "ignorance, iniquity, impotence and death," which Calvin characterized as "the fruits of sin" (I: 215).²

Only out of His infinite mercy did God choose to grant salvation to some mortals, and His choice was an eternal mystery to the flawed minds of men. Through the covenant He made with Abraham, God had restored a limited capacity to man: the ability to have faith in His justice and mercy. Through the death and rebirth of Jesus Christ, God had determined that men, through their total submission to His will, could "implore his helping hand" to guide them throughout their sin-ridden lives (I: 215).

²All quotations from and references to the Institutes are from John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, translated and annotated by Ford Lewis Battles, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975).

By his mercy alone he granted salvation to a limited number of human souls, but no man would ever know to whom God had preordained salvation.

From the day he was born (or converted to the faith), a Puritan assumed he was a sinner destined for hell, a miserable wretch in God's creation. If he were constant in his faith, he spent his life trying to glorify the omnipotent, just, yet merciful God who had allowed him to live at all. He tried to live his daily life according to God's laws, he studied the Bible, and he worshipped with his Puritan brethren in order to glorify the God who had spared his worthless life. The sermons a Puritan heard were the most powerful source of enlightenment and comfort he had within the grim confines of his mortal vision. To listen to a preacher who could remind him of both the wrath and the mercy of God was the most vital, most critical aspect of his personal faith.

As Puritan preachers, Cotton, Hooker and Shepard had learned to prepare sermons for the ears of their Puritan congregations early in their training at Emmanuel College, and they knew their own roles as preachers were particularly crucial to the faith. The Institutes had dictated both the source and the function of a sermon: "We are indeed entirely so to consider that their [pastors'] whole task is limited to the ministry of God's Word; their whole wisdom to the knowledge of his Word, their whole eloquence, to its proclamation" (I:268). Calvin had also outlined the limits of ministers' powers:

If they turn aside from this task we are to consider them to be empty-headed and sluggish, stammerers, faithless in all respects, deserters of their office . . . if, abandoning God's Word, they are carried away by their own minds, they can become nothing but fools (I:268).

By the time Cotton, Hooker and Shepard were learning to prepare sermons, they had not only Calvin's Institutes but a series of manuals, written by English Puritans, to guide them. The most detailed manual was William Perkins's The Art of Propheying (1592), which outlined the form a sermon should take.

Perkins's manual reflected a close reading of Calvin's advice and warnings to ministers. Calvin had divided man's capacity to receive the Word of God into two faculties, the "understanding" and the "will." In order for an unregenerate listener to be moved, he must be given the opportunity to use his reason, as flawed as it might be, to understand the words first, after which he might be moved inwardly to receive the Word into his heart, or "will" (I:179). In keeping with Calvin, Perkins instructed preachers to always prepare a sermon as a "translation to vulgar people," first appealing to their most basic knowledge of Biblical passages and, after instructing their reason, appealing to their hearts in the hope that they be stirred (16).³

Perkins and other manual writers directed preachers to begin each sermon with a text directly from the "Canonical Scripture," because "our Savior uttered only the Word of his Father," and

³New England Puritans used either the King James Bible or the Geneva Bible (Jones and Jones, eds., 175).

"paul taught nothing but Scripture" (263). The choice of the text was the preacher's own, and depended on the occasion of the sermon. If the sermon was meant for a special occasion--a funeral, a wedding, or in New England, an election day--the preacher might choose a specifically appropriate Biblical passage to reflect the ceremony or event. Daily or Sabbath sermon topics, according to the manuals, were left to the discretion and taste of the individual pastor, although preachers were encouraged to choose passages which they suspected to be particularly difficult or confusing to their lay congregations.⁴

After a preacher read the text, he "opened" the passage, explaining the circumstances of the text in a logical, simple manner, always keeping in mind the "decent and orderly" fashion that Paul commanded and that Calvin reinforced. Next, the preacher drew a "doctrine" from the specific Biblical passage he had explained. Again, the manuals emphasized that a preacher must be logical and clear as he developed the significant aspects of the text, now in terms of church doctrine, and as he articulated the consequences, or the conclusion of his text. In this part of a sermon, the preacher might rely on examples, or "comparate arguments," to help him clarify his doctrinal lesson (Perkins 234). He might use other scriptural associations to contrast or highlight his "reasons" for the doctrine.

⁴Occasional and regular, or "Sabbath" sermons were quite different from each other in purpose and content, and require separate evaluation. Unless otherwise noted, the remarks in this study refer only to regular sermons.

The last major part of a Puritan sermon was the appeal to the listeners' wills by means of "uses" and "applications." In his manual The Faithful Shepherd (1607), Richard Bernard defined the "uses and application" section of a sermon as that part "when the doctrine is used to bring us to the exercise of Christian duties to God and men" (70). In this final stage of the sermon, the preacher outlined the ways in which his listeners could apply the scripture and the doctrines to their own lives. This section was also called "homespeaking" because the preacher was encouraged to include himself as one to whom the uses could be of value. Always with the unregenerate in mind, yet also mindful of his own position as teacher, a minister was advised to design his application remarks as:

a nearer bringing of the use delivered, after a more general sort, in the third person, as spoken to persons absent; to the time, place, and persons then present; and uttered in the second person, or in the first, when the Minister, as often the Apostle doth, will include himself with them (Bernard 77).

This basic sermon pattern, dependent on Scripture and the Institutes, allowed preachers to accomplish several specific goals. They could make Scripture familiar to their listeners, they could instruct on church doctrine, and they could offer guidelines for day-to-day living. Ultimately, a Puritan preacher hoped to accomplish what Bernard described in his manual, "to pierce into the minds of such, as are present, with a moving of godly affection" (63).

As structured as a sermon should be, a preacher was advised

to employ certain rhetorical devices to keep his audience's attention, and to avoid mechanical, overly predictable sermons:

. . . A minister, after he has entered upon his text, should never say: This is the doctrine, this is the proof, this is the use: now to the reasons, now we will make application . . . it interrupts the course of the speech, and it is too disjointed, and less pathetic (Bernard 80).

Just as the form of a Puritan sermon was based on Biblical models, the style was dictated by the Bible and best articulated by Calvin:

Now, since that uncultivated and almost rude simplicity [of the Bible] procures itself more reverence than all the graces of rhetoric, what opinion can we form, but that the force of truth in the sacred Scripture is too powerful to need the assistance of verbal art? (I:82).

The manuals instructed preachers to use the rhetorical figures used by Christ and the Apostle, and discouraged excessive ornamentation or the use of foreign languages, which would have obscured the Biblical lessons and worked against the clear logic of the sermon. In his popular manual The Marrow of Sacred Divinity (1623), William Ames reminded preachers to discriminate carefully with regard to style: ". . . nothing is to be admitted which doth not make for the spiritual edification of the people, neither anything to be omitted where by we may in a sure way attain that end" (162).

The manuals encouraged the use of allegory particularly, because "Paul in his teaching useth them often," but preachers were warned to choose "sparingly and soberly" (Perkins 341).

Always with the Bible and the dogma of their religion in mind, the manual writers advised preachers to use reason, restraint and familiarity when speaking from their pulpits.

Cotton, Hooker and Shepard had long since mastered the rules set out in these manuals by the time they were preaching in New England. Of all the skills they brought to their new pulpits--Cotton in Boston, Hooker in Hartford, and Shepard in Cambridge--perhaps the emphasis on familiarity served them best, at least initially. Their listeners, familiar with sermon form from any number of English Puritan churches, knew what to expect when their preachers began opening texts in New England pulpits. This predictability became a significant advantage in New England especially, where many listeners could take notes easily and could recapitulate entire sermons later for home study. Their notes were of value beyond the home, however. They were often used to supplement a minister's own notes when he intended to send his sermon to England to be published.

Few Puritan preachers wrote out manuscripts of their sermons before they delivered them, both because the length of a sermon--between two and four hours--prohibited memorization, and because Calvin had warned that too much writing might lead a pastor away from the Bible and toward contamination of the "worship of God with our own inventions" (VI:4). Colonial preachers spoke from outlines and brief notes which indicated

basic texts and other sections of their sermons.⁵

A preacher chose to publish a sermon for various reasons, sometimes on the advice of his colleagues, sometimes on the urging of his pastorate, and sometimes of his own accord. He began the publishing process by writing out a manuscript based on his notes and the notes of at least one of his listeners. The title of one of Cotton's sermons gives credit to an auditor's "shorthand" notes: An Exposition upon the Thirteenth Chapter of the Revelation . . . Taken from his Mouth in Short-Writing, and Some Part of It Corrected by Himself Soon After the Preaching Thereof.

Like much popular literature of the seventeenth century, sermons were subject to pirating. A series of published sermons under the title The Sincere Convert astonished the supposed author, Thomas Shepard:

That which is called The Sincere Convert I have not the book, I once saw it; it was a collection of such Notes . . . which one procuring of me, published them without my will or privity; I scarce know what it contains, nor do I like to see it . . .
(God's Plot 261).

Despite pirating, and with the help of their parishioners, Cotton, Hooker and Shepard all revised a number of their sermons into manuscripts which became authorized published sermons during their lifetimes. Although their publications distinguished them

⁵The only extant notes among the three subjects of this study are those of Thomas Shepard, which are preserved at Harvard University.

as the three most popular and powerful ministers of their generation in New England, they were always preachers first and writers second. However, Thomas Hooker's definition of his duties as preacher could apply to his role as writer as well:

We shall knit the whole frame [of a sermon] together by the joynte and sinews of distribution and divisions, that such as are attentive may never be at a loss
(Application of Redemption 3).

Whatever Hooker and his fellow pastors intended to accomplish with their sermons, they ultimately accomplished much more than guidance for their New England congregations of the 1630s and 40s. The body of their published work, over one hundred and fifty works, has held the attention of scholars and has afforded both historians and literary scholars a valuable resource. The sermons have become essential historical documents because they explain the tenets of Puritan theology and because they help explain certain aspects of colonial culture. As literary texts, the sermons represent purposeful, powerful discourse. Particularly in the twentieth century, the sermons of Cotton, Hooker and Shepard have been examined from many different viewpoints and evaluated in many terms. Hooker's definition of his task rings true: those who have studied the sermons have never been "at a loss" for words about the significance of these works.

Historians have relied on the sermons of Cotton, Hooker and Shepard as primary sources for a wide variety of works on

colonial culture. Perry Miller, in his works on the Puritan mind, uses the sermons of Cotton, Hooker and Shepard to document the intellectual "strains" which characterized American Puritan thought. In The New England Mind in the Seventeenth Century, Miller discusses the Puritan debt to Augustine, Calvin and the rhetorician Petrus Ramus, by pointing to the characteristics in the sermons which reflect these influences. His final analysis--that it was the rational, systemized religion of the Puritans, most apparent in their sermons, that ultimately defined the entire Puritan community--continues to be controversial, and has fostered many subsequent studies. The New England Mind, perhaps the most profound of all intellectual studies of Puritan thought, has been assessed by one historian as "the monumental study to which all subsequent work on the subject is elaboration, clarification, qualification, or contradiction" (McGiffert, ed., God's Plot 240).

There are several works which do supplement Miller's studies of Puritan theology and sermons in New England. Alan Simpson's Puritanism in Old and New England remains the clearest, most concise study of the effects of Puritanism on the English converts. In a direct response to Miller's highly theoretical study, Simpson's is a general description of the motives, both personal and political, which led Elizabethan and Jacobean preachers and laymen to join the Puritan faith. "Miller," writes Simpson, "has told us too much about the Puritan mind and not enough about the Puritan feelings" (21). A further response to

Miller is Edmund Morgan's Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea, which describes the actual conversion process that the Puritan clergy and writers set out for their congregations. Norman Pettit, in The Heart Prepared: Grace and Conversion in Puritan Spiritual Life, also describes the Puritan conversion experience, emphasizing the controversial and delicate distinctions which preachers had to make between preparation for conversion and conversion itself. These three books, like Miller's, depend upon Puritan sermons as authoritative documents, and all three use the sermons of Cotton, Hooker and Shepard liberally.

Social historians have also depended on the sermons when investigating specific characteristics of the Puritan community. In Winthrop's Boston: Portrait of a Puritan Town, Darrett Rutman explains the significance of the "coming of the ministers" to New England:

Bringing with them those deep religious feelings which had, in the main, separated them from their conforming brethren . . . the ministers augmented the already high religious tone of the commonwealth . . . they brought with them . . . their great concern for theology and polity, their reputations for scholarship, and their pedantry (109).

Emery Battis describes a critical episode in early Puritan Boston in Saints and Sectaries: Anne Hutchinson and the Antinomian Controversy in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and he supplements court records and correspondence with relevant excerpts from the sermons of the time, particularly those of Cotton and Hooker.

All historical studies of the Puritan culture, from Miller's

investigation of the collective Puritan intellect to Kenneth Lockridge's social history of life in a single Puritan village in A New England Town, acknowledge and often draw on the published texts of the sermons.⁶ As the study of Puritan culture has advanced since Miller wrote The New England Mind, the "all-purpose" sermon has itself become the subject of historical investigation.

The most thorough discussion of sermon delivery is Babette Levy, Preaching in the First Half Century of New England History, an overview of the details of every aspect of sermons, from a preacher's training, to his preparation of his notes, to his actual delivery. Also useful are Emory Elliott, "The Development of the Puritan Funeral Sermon and Elegy," and Howard H. Martin, "Puritan Preachers on Preaching: Notes on American Colonial Rhetoric," both discussions of preaching practices. Winfred Herget explains the New England practice of "short-writing," or note-taking by the congregations, and the complicated, sometimes troublesome transatlantic publication process in two essays, "Preaching and Publication," and "Transcription and Transmission of the Hooker Corpus." George Selement offers statistics on

⁶There are many good general histories of Puritanism in England and New England. Among the most useful and best written are the following: Daniel Boorstin, The Americans: The Colonial Experience; Patrick Collinson, The Elizabethan Puritan Movement; David D. Hall, The Faithful Shepherd: A History of the New England Ministry in the Seventeenth Century; William Haller, The Rise of Puritanism; Samuel Eliot Morison, Builders of the Bay Colony; Michael Walzer, The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics; and Larzar Ziff, Puritanism in America: New Culture in a New World.

publications by first-generation preachers in "Publication and the Puritan Minister."

In sharp contrast to these intellectual and social histories, studies of colonial American art have traditionally not included sermons as examples of "literature," nor have literary scholars treated sermons as texts worthy of aesthetic evaluation until recently. In "The Veiled Vision: The Role of Aesthetics in Early American Intellectual History," Norman Grabo points out that historians have neglected to study Puritan art, including poetry, spiritual narratives, elegies, and sermons, because "to the student of the intellectual history of the American colonies, this [study of art] may appear to be a useless, if not a dangerous, speculation to entertain" (24). He suggests that "if . . . art . . . structures and expresses the nature of human feeling . . . the intellectual historian is going to have to take greater account of the symbolism of artistic form than he has . . ." (24).

Only recently have scholars begun to examine Puritan aesthetics. Grabo defends this recent area of study by suggesting the Puritan attitude toward art and invention:

. . . The Puritans found means to satisfy the universal craving for well-wrought mimesis . . . they turned to literature. Their style and their taste differed from ours, but the satisfaction we derive from modern literature they undoubtedly found in exempla (24).

Grabo's own contribution has been a series of essays on Puritan aesthetics, including "Colonial American Theology: Holiness and the Lyric Impulse," and "John Cotton's Aesthetics:

A Sketch." Others have offered valuable insights into how and why sermons were crafted as they were. Larzar Ziff, in "Literary Consequences of Puritanism," compares the Puritan sermon form to the Anglican sermon of the same time and distinguishes between them by defining the controlling aesthetic principle in a Puritan sermon:

. . . the sermon was completely aside from the conversion process unless the preacher were regarded as an instrument of the Holy Ghost, as a speaker of the saving word (39).

The "saving word" was not the preacher's own words, but was "the force which hovered behind them" (39). This force reflected "the passionate outburst" which could "work as it will among other men" (41). Passion transcended "words in favor of the word," and found its most eloquent expression in the plainness of the prose itself: "passion and plainness," writes Ziff, "are not contradictory" (41).

The passion and the plainness to which Grabo and Ziff point are qualities of Puritan sermons which have attracted the attention of literary scholars and rhetoricians. Robert Daly has noted that no "American Puritan has left an ars poetica" (136), yet by examining the texts of Puritan poetry, autobiography, and sermons, scholars have been able to point out and evaluate many of the distinguishing aesthetic principles and literary characteristics of the sermons.

In two articles on Puritan poetics, Daly and Michael Clark identify the predominant influence behind all Puritan writing. Daly explains in "Puritan Poetics: The World, the Flesh, and

God":

Through his reading of the world and the Bible, the Puritan could discover all that he needed to know of God, indeed, all that he could possibly know . . . He could read "the name of God" in His "works" as well as in the Bible (149).

Puritan writers wrote and lived in a "symbolic world" where they relied on "types or symbols in both their Bible and their own experiences"(150). To all Puritan writers--poets or preachers--the "world was a text, a system of metaphors, a language, a voice"(153).

Clark, in "'The Crucified Phrase': Sign and Desire in Puritan Semiology," further explains the Puritan reliance on Biblical material and worldly experience. The Puritans acknowledged this world and used it in their writings to signify the Word, but they also believed that words were only "an insignificant re-presentation" of God's Word (286). Human words, humanly devised symbols, and human reason were "'prints' marking the presence of a truth that once was apparent in but is presently outside of the group of characters inscribed on this world"(287). No writer or preacher could, because of his flawed human nature, perceive God's truth in words, but he could mimic the truth by referring to God's Word. Man was "imprinted" with God's mark, and any Puritan writer used symbols that indicated His mark (290).

Daly and Clark also discuss how the Puritans' use of logic in their writing reflects their emphasis on the "imprinted" words of man. The reorganization of Aristotelian logic into the

"collapsed" system of Ramus, fully embraced by trained Puritan theologians and writers, was perfectly suited for their Biblical language, as Daly explains:

For the Ramist, rhetoric was trivial;
rhetorical garnishing was decoration
For the Puritan . . . figures and symbolic
correspondences were not created by the
rhetorician . . . they were created by God
and found in the world . . . (146).

Daly defines the unwritten, implied poetic principles of Puritan writers as discourse that "dealt primarily with perception and articulation rather than with creation"(146). The "centerpiece" of any piece of Puritan writing was the Bible, particularly the New Testament versions of Christ's death and redemption. The most outstanding "print" which characterizes all Puritan writing was the emphasis on suffering, death and rebirth, which Daly acknowledges: ". . . it is the Crucifixion . . . that provides a metaphor for all signs . . ." (290). Both the simple empiric reasoning of Ramism--which restricted elaborate figures and complicated syllogisms--and the Biblical symbols of Christ's death and rebirth, give Puritan prose its plainness and its stress on passion: the Passion of the Christ.

Other scholars have studied the correspondence between Ramism and Puritan aesthetics. The most thorough discussion of Ramism is Miller's The New England Mind and the most perceptive analysis of Puritan/Ramist expression is in Walter Ong, Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason. Other studies of Puritan logic and its relationship to aesthetics are Eugene White, Puritan Rhetoric:

The Issue of Emotion in Religion; Keith Sprunger, "Ames Ramus, and the Method of Puritan Theology," and Roy Fred Hudson, "Rhetorical Invention in Colonial New England."

Identification of symbols and Biblical metaphors has led to several recent studies on the significance of such language. Jasper Rosenmeier sees a direct correspondence between the puritan ministers' choices of Biblical referents and their immediate circumstances in "New England's Perfection: The Image of Adam and the Image of Christ in the Antinomian Crisis, 1634 to 1638." David Cressey, "The Vast and Furious Ocean: The Passage to Puritan New England;" Phyllis Jones, "Biblical Rhetoric and the Pulpit Literature of Early New England;" and David Leverenz, The Language of Puritan Feeling, are all further studies of the use of Biblical language and signs in Puritan writing.

The most comprehensive contribution to the study of Puritan types, however, is a series of works by Sacvan Bercovitch, in which he identifies specific patterns of Biblical types and explains the significance of these patterns.

Bercovitch explains the power that metaphors had in colonial sermons in the introduction of The American Puritan Imagination: "To understand a metaphor we must first know its background and implications . . . to know its background, and implications, is to understand the metaphor"(7). He cites the example of the "city on a hill" metaphor and explains:

To the modern reader . . . the terms mean anything--i.e. nothing in particular. To the Puritan their meanings were both precise and complex . . . "city" meant a social order and

the bonds of a true visible church; the concept of "hill" opened into a series of scriptural landmarks demarcating the march of redemptive history (7).

Within their rhetorically sound, carefully planned sermons lay the "myth within which the colony defined its origins and purpose"(9). This myth, constantly implied and integrated through Biblical metaphor, explained and justified their religion and their environment:

The New World . . . was the modern counterpart of the wilderness through which the Israelites reached Canaan, of the desert where Christ overcame the tempter (9).

Biblical "types," like the "city on the hill," implied more than a historical counterpart, however. Any symbol from the Bible was also an "antitype," a foreshadowing of a "journey, now by a Christian Israel to the long-awaited 'new heaven and new earth'"(9). Preachers particularly used types and antitypes to reveal both the past and the future: ". . . the story of America was enclosed in the scriptures, its past postdated and its future antedated in prophecy" (9).

Puritan writers, says Bercovitch, fused symbolism and allegory to meet their needs, to "yoke together the private and the public pilgrimage"(13). The combination of an allegorical "wilderness" and a real wilderness, wrought into discourse and voiced from a pulpit, allowed a preacher to identify "the literal-spiritual contours" of his world.

In all of his works on typology in the sermons, Bercovitch points to the frequency and choice of Biblical references to

explain how Puritan preachers explained the conflicts of living as spiritual beings in the corporeal world. Especially in "Typology in Puritan New England: The Williams-Cotton Controversy Reassessed," and "Horologicals to Chronometricals: The Rhetoric of the Jeremiad," Bercovitch points to the types in sermons as a gauge by which to analyze crises or changes in the Puritan faith and community.

Bercovitch defends the close study of typology on the grounds that examination of rhetorical and figurative characteristics "allows us . . . to see the Gestalt, the overall coherence of American Puritanism" (8). Puritanism in the colonies fused many traditions and many Protestant sects, and the disparate groups who found themselves in New England were "mutually incompatible" (8). The Puritan faith "offered a saint a comprehensive identity" because the spiritual leaders "wrought the synthesis by a gargantuan act of will and imagination," most apparent in literature (8). The sermons united the congregations, and confirmed to them that they were "as One Man with one soul in one body" (7).

Bercovitch's thesis that the symbolic language of the sermons itself mirrors and characterizes the Puritan community, complements another area of sermon scholarship: the study of the Puritan audience. This most recent field draws on both the historical and literary qualities of the sermons, and offers another contribution to our understanding of both the Puritan community and Puritan writing.

Social historians have begun to document the attitudes of puritan laymen by searching for church records, personal testimonies, and public documents which contain lay responses to religious issues. Rutman asks a series of questions about audience in "New England as Idea and Society Revisited":

The minister rises in his pulpit to speak. What does his audience hear and how does what they hear affect their behavior? And how does their response affect the form of the idea when next enunciated? (56).

Rutman is answered by George Selement, who, in "The Meeting of Elite and Popular Minds at Cambridge, New England, 1638-1645," offers several years' worth of written testimonies of faith by Shepard's parishioners. Selement concludes that although "their comprehension was understandably shallower than Shepard's," their responses were still close reflections of Shepard's teachings.

In a response to both Rutman and Selement, Patricia Caldwell offers a literary perspective of these lay testimonies in The Puritan Conversion Narrative. She concludes that, based on their use of Biblical language and narrative tones, Shepard's parishioners were not so enlightened as Selement portrays them. The first emigrants to Cambridge, says Caldwell, "were stammering to themselves in the dark"(115).

Caldwell's work suggests that answers to Rutman's questions about audience may indeed lie in literary analyses of Puritan writings. Documentation of their own salvation was rare among laymen, and data of their responses is scarce. The key to understanding their relationships to their faith might be found

by looking, once more, to the sermons these laymen heard or read. In two recent studies, scholars point to the narrative structure of the sermons and to their oratorical qualities as clues to audience response.

Phyllis Jones, in "Puritan's Progress: The Story of the soul's Salvation in the Early New England Sermons," characterizes the power of the Puritan sermon as lying "less in texture--their style and imagery--than in a structural feature--their underlying narrative about the soul's search for salvation" (14). Parallel to their three-part, highly structured doctrines were narrations about "the soul's heroic struggle for faith," which formed, ultimately, a "big folktale" (15). Jones compares a folktale to a sermon:

Like folk narratives, any passage of the soul's story was performed before an audience that shared with its teller a communal sense of the whole tale, an understanding of its conventions . . . its purpose . . . was to educate the audience about fundamentals (16).

The narration, most strongly characterized by its use of repetition and traditional values, "mirrors spiritual reality--again and again the Christian loses Christ, flees from the Lord, and must be reunited"(19). This very repetition will "strengthen belief in one's own potential for salvation"(19).

Jones suggests that the folk narrative in a Puritan sermon allowed the audience to identify with the hero and to take comfort in a tale where "the protagonist is moving toward success"(24). For the preachers, the narrative structure was "probably a rhetorical resource" which could "lend a kind of

persuasion to their efforts in the way that citation of scripture did" (24).

Always aware of their audiences' day-to-day concerns, preachers were "performers" who could adapt their narratives to reflect immediate church or community issues. Jones's correspondence of a sermon to a performance, or a preacher to a performer, is supported by Edward Davidson in "'God's Well-Trodden Foot-Paths': Puritan Preaching and Sermon Form."

Davidson suggests that Puritan sermons affected the listeners immediately because they "found in the delivery . . . a pleasureableness owing to the familiarity with the repetitive patterns . . . which a minister could employ from sermon to sermon, from week to week, and from year to year" (504). The preacher was a performer who became "what he spoke," and who maintained not only a spiritual bond with his congregation, but a physical relationship as well. The immediacy of his "performance" was effective because

All human feeling and thought, from the most intricate and profound to the most ordinary and trivial, were located and could be expressed in traditional biblical language. Personal fear, sorrows, joy were described and appeased only in biblical images(522).

Each time a preacher spoke, he presented the "central drama" of salvation, but each time was different: "there were the varieties, the new texts and evidence, the assertions and proofs which make the difference" (523). The dramas of the sermons were "real stories" about "real people and real events," and the audience of any sermon responded to the "connection between

scripture and the present" in such an immediate way that "one could feel in one's own person or among persons nearby in the community the living, breathing truth" (523).

No other literature is so immediately responsible to audience as oratory, and no oratory is so intensely personal as pulpit oratory. In Puritan New England, a preacher's task--to combine Scripture and the tenets of the faith with the immediacy of an audience--demanded that he be aware of his audience's expectations when he planned and delivered his sermons. If each sermon represented a dramatic "performance," at least a reenactment of the Christian drama, then the preacher was an "actor" of sorts, who took his direction from God through the Bible.

Cotton, Hooker and Shepard did not think of themselves as "performers" any more than they thought of themselves as "Americans." But certainly, one way to understand their relationships to their congregations is to consider their sermons as oratory, as live performances, presented to live audiences. If each delivery was a performance, then we can ask several questions. What does the text reveal about the preacher and his audience? More specifically, how can we identify those of his strategies which are directed toward his immediate audience? What are those strategies, and what do they reveal about his attitude toward his congregation? Finally, what might we learn about the nature of a Puritan audience--its needs, fears,

attitudes--by recognizing how a minister addresses this audience?

We know a great deal about Puritan preachers and sermons. We know that the sermons were part of a long and rich intellectual and literary tradition, and that all sermons had common characteristics. We know about the ministers' training, duties, and method in their sermons, and that they intended to "pierce the minds" of their listeners.

We know much less about Puritan audiences. Historians can provide us with demographic statistics and other information about the environment in which the sermons were delivered. The first generation of New England settlers congregated in cramped windowless "Mud-Wall" meeting houses which were always too dark, and which were uncomfortably hot in summer and cold in winter (Rutman, Winthrop's Boston 98). Parishioners sat on long backless benches for hours at a time, and their preachers addressed them from pulpits which were only slightly raised (Battis 87-88). The atmosphere in the earliest New England churches was, by our standards, severe.

We also know that, although not all colonists were church members, their community leaders required all citizens: men, women and children; farmers, craftsmen and servants, to attend services twice on Sundays and at least once during the week (Levy 40; Jones and Jones 4). Whether they could read or not, most parishioners were familiar with the published sermons, could probably memorize many passages from the sermons, and could most

certainly recognize Biblical language.⁷

Selement's approach to audience--to isolate one congregation and document its immediate response to its minister's words-- is an effective means to learning more about the minister-parishioner relationship. Just as valuable and more accessible a method would be to review one complete sermon as a "live performance," and to isolate the minister's own dramatic strategies within this one complete "act."

For this study, I have chosen authorized published sermons of Cotton, Hooker and Shepard which, out of all of their New England sermons, seem to be most well-crafted and which were particularly popular with their own congregations, the three largest in first-generation New England. Using a critical method which relates to the oratorical, dramatic nature of sermons, I will identify the audience-related strategies in Cotton's The Covenant of God's Free Grace, Hooker's The Christian's Two Chiefe Lessons, and Shepard's The Saint's Jewel. To isolate a preacher's approaches to his audience in one sermon allows us to experience the sermon from beginning to end, in the same order and manner which an audience would have experienced it. A close

⁷There is some controversy over just how literate the lay population was. I agree with David Hall, who writes in "Toward a History of Popular Religion in Early New England" that parishioners were "extraordinarily familiar with the Bible," and that these people were most likely "readers not only of the Bible but also of catechisms, printed sermons, [and] books of devotion . . ." (51). See also Hall, "The World of Print and Collective Mentality in Seventeenth Century New England;" Rutman, "New England as Idea and Society Revisited;" Selement, "The Meeting of Elite and Popular Minds at Cambridge, New England;" and Ong, Orality and Literacy, 5-15.

textual reading of one sermon cannot serve some purposes. It will not allow us to evaluate the preacher's career, nor his other writings, nor the general aesthetic principles which characterized his other efforts in the pulpit. A reading of one text by one preacher will certainly not tell us a great deal about the historical details of the Puritan community. All of these issues are served better by studies from historical and other literary approaches. However, a close reading is not intended to enlighten us on these issues, but serves another, equally important, and long neglected function: to bring out of relief one dramatic "journey" of the soul, in order to suggest the expectations of the Puritan "souls" who were struggling to comprehend the sermon. A reader of a single sermon will travel on the same journey, and will be presented with the same patterns of language and composition as were the Puritans who heard the sermon. To read a sermon in its entirety entitles the reader to appreciate the expectations and the responses of the original audience, whose experience it was to listen to sermons one at a time. Cumulatively, close readings of three sermons by three preachers will suggest three individual dramatic experiences. Only after exploring the sermons in terms of audience expectations can we begin to evaluate these expectations in terms of other data.⁸

⁸There are some (although not many) studies of entire texts of sermons of Cotton, Hooker, and Shepard, to which I will refer in the corresponding chapters on these preachers. This approach to the sermons--to explicate one sermon and to evaluate it in literary terms--is relatively new to Puritan scholarship,

In the introduction to Reader Response Approaches to Biblical and Secular Texts, Robert Detweiler writes that a reader response approach "is well-suited to the study of biblical narrative" (21). I would suggest that this critical approach can apply equally well to pulpit literature, which relies implicitly on biblical narratives. Reading any text, including a sermon, forces the reader to use several skills on several levels, "for the text has 'backgrounds' and 'foregrounds,' different narrative viewpoints, alternative layers of meaning between which we are moving" (Eagleton 77-78). We are able to isolate assumptions and expectations which we have as readers, and by recognizing these expectations as a part of our own reading experience, we can understand more clearly the expectations and assumptions of the historical, colonial audience, or in critical terms, the "real" audience. I will read the three sermons according to the critical approach of Wolfgang Iser, Stanley Fish, Jane Tompkins, and others, in order to identify those strategies in the sermons which suggest characteristics of both the narrators--the preachers--and the readers--their audience.

In his analysis of responses to fiction, Iser points out that any text is "composed of a variety of perspectives that outline the author's view and also provide access to what the reader is meant to visualize" (35). There are four main

perhaps because traditionally the sermons have not been regarded as literary works.

perspectives: narrator, characters, plot, and the "implied," fictitious reader, none of which is identical to "the meaning of the text" (35). These four perspectives "provide guidelines originating from different starting points . . . continually shading into each other and devised in such a way that they all converge on a general meeting place" (35). That "meeting place" is the text's meaning, which can only be "visualized from a standpoint" (35). Therefore, textual perspectives and standpoint are intertwined, although neither is actually represented in the words of the text. Instead, "they emerge during the reading process, in the course of which the reader's role is to occupy shifting vantage points" (35).

Iser's analysis of the reader of fiction can apply to the reader of other types of discourse, including sermons, and his "reader" can be a "listener" as well. Every Puritan sermon had a narrator (the preacher), characters (the participants in any aspect of the Christian drama), a plot (the dramatic journey of God's creatures), and a reader, or listener. As a minister unfolded the drama of his sermon, he worked and reworked these elements, sometimes taking on different narrative tones, sometimes changing his own viewpoint from narrator to participant, sometimes referring to characters from the Bible, or sometimes reviewing the "plot" of any number of Bible stories. Each shift in his approach required his audience to shift their expectations, in order to appreciate the nature of the individual dramatic journey they were being asked to make. Ultimately, at

the end of each journey, he asked them to participate by making certain personal choices based on the standpoints and perspectives they had developed during the course of the sermon.

Reading, or listening, "triggers developing acts of comprehension," because a text cannot be transferred to the reader's mind at one time, but can only be perceived in "consecutive phases" (109). A reader has a "wandering viewpoint," which Iser explains: "We [the readers] look forward, we look back, we decide, we change our decisions, we form expectations, we are shocked by their nonfulfillment, we question, we muse, we accept, we reject" (293).

Iser's description of the experience of reading applies to listening as well. As listeners hear a sermon, they must change their viewpoints, and they must constantly integrate new information into their listening experience. The work that Fish has provided on John Donne's sermon Death's Duell in terms of audience response provides further precedence for the value of this approach to the study of sermons. After explaining the composition of the sermon, Fish begins to isolate the points in the sermon where any one of Donne's perspectives change, or, as Fish describes them, points where the audience is supplied with any "turn to Donne's screw" (68). After examining all of the points where both Donne's approach and his audience's expectations shift, Fish offers analysis: "The preacher . . . displaces attention from his own efforts to the Spirit which informs them: and by emptying his art of its (claims to) power,

he acknowledges his own powerlessness, becoming like us . . . wholly dependent on the Lord" (69).

Fish's model provides us with an example of the method of identifying responses of readers to sermons. Although he mentions passages from the sermons of Donne's Puritan contemporaries for purposes of comparison, he does not analyze a puritan sermon in its entirety. The present study is intended to employ a similar audience-related method to the texts of Puritan sermons.

In each sermon in this study, the preacher uses his own style and a distinct set of strategies, or "roles," which require certain responses from his audience. In terms of "performance," this method will show that Cotton considered himself and his listeners all to be the "actors" who could participate equally in their spiritual growth during the delivery. Hooker participated in his drama as a more detached narrator, urging that all action be taken by his listeners. And Shepard, much like Cotton, often assumed a "leading role" in his drama and encouraged his listeners to support him immediately with their testimonies.

After identifying the specific strategies which each preacher used in his sermon, I will use these strategies to suggest how each preacher expected his listeners to respond. For example, Cotton and Shepard often deviated from the standard form by including a series of simple questions and answers, much like a catechism, in which they gradually explicated scriptural

phrases or individual words. That they devoted lengthy sections of their sermons to such question-answer segments tells us something about what they thought their listeners needed to understand most clearly at the moment, and tells us something about how they expected their audiences to participate.

I will characterize these expectations toward audience in each series of sermons, and I will then compare the strategies and assumptions of the three preachers, looking for both similar patterns in their approaches and differences in their assumptions about the capacities of their listeners. I will offer the collective patterns and assumptions which I find as a composite of the Puritan preacher's attitude toward his colonial audience. Finally, I will suggest how the dynamic between a preacher and his audience--how the text reveals the audience's expectations--might suggest certain characteristics of the Puritan audience itself.

In his analysis of seventeenth-century sermons, Fish suggests that a reader (or listener) to a Puritan sermon "is never asked to do more than one can and, more important, . . . is never asked to undo what has already been done" (72). I would suggest that a close reading of a Puritan sermon reveals that the audience is required to do a great deal more than Fish implies in his study, and that a Puritan minister demands that his listeners work to "undo" many of the challenges he sets before them during the course of the sermon. The tensions between language and

feeling, between words and the Word, between God's justice and His mercy, were part of any sermon in a Puritan church.

Cotton, Hooker and Shepard understood well the dynamic that often eludes those of us who read their sermons: a sermon only existed when a minister spoke and a listener heard, and it was only valuable to both when a preacher's words were taken to the listener's heart. Cotton knew this when he directed the following question toward himself and his congregation:

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. How comes it to passe, that the word lights on me, first to wound me, and then to bind me up? (The Way of Life 164).

As a Puritan preacher and writer, Cotton reworded and rephrased this fundamental question about language many times for the benefit of his New England congregation. Hooker and Shepard did the same. By allowing them to speak further for themselves through their sermons, we may better understand now that which they knew about the colonists who listened and read their sermons then.

CHAPTER II

Labor and Constancy:

John Cotton's The Covenant of God's Free Grace

There were two serious challenges to the authority of the church in the Massachusetts Bay Colony during its earliest years. In 1631, the Reverend Roger Williams began confronting church leaders on several controversial issues. Although he had originally been invited to preach in Boston, he refused to associate himself with the established church. He claimed that the church in Boston was not the "true church" since it had not separated publically from the official Church of England. During 1632 and 1633, while preaching at Salem Village, he protested again, this time over the issue of land rights. He claimed that the Puritan settlers in New England had no legal claim to lands which belonged to the Indians in the area. After several years of heated debate with church and civil authorities, Williams was excommunicated and banished from the colony in 1636.

Anne Hutchinson and her followers posed a second serious threat to the church and to the colony from 1634 to 1638, when they claimed that God had enabled them to tell whether or not they were saved. When they claimed to be in direct communication with the Almighty, and when they attacked the New England clergy for preaching "heretical teachings," they were brought to trial and questioned by civil and church officials. Eventually

convicted of heresy, Hutchinson and her followers, like Williams before them, were excommunicated and banished to the wilds of Rhode Island.

These two crises in early New England had much in common: they involved both church policy and the lay government, they forced the New England communities into defensive positions, and the resolutions to both crises showed the established institutions in New England at their most dogmatic. The Williams and Hutchinson controversies also shared another characteristic: the Reverend John Cotton of Boston was a major participant in both crises.

That Cotton should have had a powerful role in any important crisis in New England is only consistent with what we know of the rest of his life. His biographers agree that Cotton thrived on controversy, and the volumes of letters, political writings, and series of sermons he left indicate that he had maintained strong beliefs in nonconformity and had played a central role in the Puritan community since the time he had been converted to Calvinism as a young man at Emmanuel College.¹

¹The most thorough biography of Cotton is Ziff, The Career of John Cotton. The earliest accounts of his life are John Norton, The Life and Death of . . . John Cotton . . ., and Cotton Mather, Johannes in Eremo and Magnalia Christi Americana, vol. I. Other scholars have evaluated Cotton's significance to New England history: Battis, Saints and Sectaries; Bremer, "In Defense of Regicide: John Cotton on the Execution of Charles I;" Etulian, "The New Puritan: Recent Views of John Cotton;" Hall, The Antinomian Controversy; Hammond, "The Bride of Redemptive Time: John Cotton and the Canticles Controversy;" Miller, Orthodoxy in Massachusetts; Polishook, Roger Williams, John Cotton and Religious Freedom; Rosenmeier, "The Teacher and the Witness: John Cotton and Roger Williams;" and Stoeber,

Cotton was born in 1584 into an Anglican family in Derbyshire, an area which was characterized by religious intolerance during the late Elizabethan years, and where several Catholics and Puritans were executed during the years when Cotton was a child (Ziff 3-5). His father, a barrister, sent Cotton to Derby Grammar School and later, on the advice of the local Anglican priest, enrolled him in the most respected and rigorous training program for the Anglican ministry--Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1597, at the age of thirteen, Cotton began his formal education at Cambridge. He would never become an Anglican priest, however. His years at Trinity would lead him away from the established church and toward a lifetime of nonconformity.

Ziff suggests that in addition to studying the established curriculum of late Elizabethan Trinity--Latin, Hebrew, Theology, Rhetoric, and Logic--Cotton was also exposed to two important extracurricular influences during these early years.² The first was exposure to political and religious nonconformity: "Cotton was learning that ecclesiastical questions were not matters of black and white but that the sensible man tempered his show of doctrine with expedience" (15). The great non-conforming theologian William Perkins, whom Cotton heard preach countless times at Cambridge, set an example for all other nonconforming

"Nature, Grace and John Cotton: The Theological Dimension in the New England Antinomian Controversy."

²Excellent studies of the academic curriculum at Cambridge during the late Elizabethan age are in Curtis, Oxford and Cambridge in Transition, 1558-1642, and Howell, Logic and Rhetoric in England, 1500-1700.

theologians and thinkers of the time, and from his example, Cotton learned "how to disagree and yet conform; how to oppose and yet be with; how to practice what one believed and yet retain favor" (16).

In addition to learning lessons in diplomacy, while at Trinity Cotton was also exposed to the differences between the tenets of Calvinism and the theology of the established church. Although both the well-known Anglican preacher Lancelot Andrewes often preached at Cambridge, it was William Perkins, with his forceful plain preaching, his sound scholarship, and his compelling Calvinism, who attracted Cotton's attention.³ By the time he took his A.B. in 1602, Cotton was as well educated in Calvinist writings as he was in any of his other subjects, and when he accepted a fellowship to the most powerful stronghold of Calvinist theology in England--Emmanuel College--he "knew full well the commitment he was making He was a Puritan."(25).

The ten years that Cotton stayed at Emmanuel, from 1603 to 1612, were years of great change and confusion for the English clergy. James I, who came to the throne in 1603, had strong contempt for nonconformists, and threatened to "harrie" or hang

³The best studies of Perkins's theology and influence on English Puritanism are Curtis, Hall, The Faithful Shepherd, Miller, The New England Mind, Mitchell, English Pulpit Oratory from Andrewes to Tillotson, Pettit, The Heart Prepared, and Porter, Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge. Teresa Toulouse studies the relationship between Perkins's theology and Cotton's sermon form in "'The Art of Prophesying': John Cotton and the Rhetoric of Election," and Stanley Fish compares Perkins's sermon model (unfavorably) to John Donne's in Self-Consuming Artifacts, (70-77).

puritans (34). Several groups, including the separatist Brownists, were organizing and moving to the continent, destined eventually to move to Plymouth in Massachusetts. For Cotton, all of these events contributed to his own personal trials, because during these same years he struggled with his new-found faith. While at Emmanuel, he was forced gradually into the religious controversy to which he would devote his career.

After receiving his A.M. in 1606, Cotton acted as head lecturer at Emmanuel. His reputation was that of a sound theologian who could stir his student congregation by means of elaborate rhetorical garnishings and ornate Aristotelian logic. Because of their elaborate constructions, his sermons, not unlike many sermons of his contemporaries, sounded only vaguely Calvinistic, which perhaps reflected his own doubts about the state of his personal faith at the time. As head lecturer, he had perfected a preaching style which obscured and sometimes contradicted the very theology with which he associated himself, the doctrine of Calvin. By 1609, Cotton's doubts forced him to reconsider his calling as preacher. He had never experienced the grace which accompanied conversion, and his sermons, for all their fine craftsmanship, seemed empty and hypocritical (29).

During these same years, Cotton befriended and was influenced by Richard Sibbes, another Puritan preacher whose plain style preaching, like Perkins's, both attracted and compelled Cotton. Sibbes interpreted Calvinist doctrine somewhat differently than had Perkins, and his approach was appealing to

cotton. Instead of concentrating his sermons on the unregenerate nature of man and on his inevitable fall, Sibbes stressed the great capacity of unregenerate man to find faith. Sibbes' sermons were calls to the doubtful to have faith and to seek consolation in that faith. In plain language, he tried to instill in his listeners a sense of encouragement, and a sense of comfort in God's Word.⁴

Cotton was indeed stirred by Sibbes' more positive, more encouraging approach to his unregenerate congregation, and during the years of their association, Cotton abandoned the elegant, ornate preaching style he had perfected, and began preaching in the plain style of Perkins and Sibbes. At some point between 1610 and 1612, he experienced a conversion, in which he felt moved and strengthened by God's grace, and he recognized that indeed his calling was to be that of teacher and preacher to other doubting souls (31).⁵

Like many other Puritan preachers--among them Perkins, Sibbes, John Preston, Thomas Hooker, and Thomas Shepard--Cotton was a preacher converted by a preacher whose sermons stirred his

⁴Sibbes' theology and preaching are discussed in Collinson, Elizabethan Puritan Movement, Haller, The Rise of Puritanism, Hudson, "Richard Sibbes' Theory and Practice of Persuasion," Miller, The New England Mind, and Pettit, The Heart Prepared.

⁵Cotton left no first-hand account of his conversion experience. His biographers suggest that he received his calling after hearing a series of Sibbes' sermons in 1611 or 1612. The earliest account is Norton's, in which he describes Cotton's conversion "in his [Cotton's] own words (as near as can be remembered)" (14). The most useful discussions of Cotton's conversion experience are in Ziff, 30-33, and Hall, The Faithful Shepherd, 48-55.

soul. At the center of his own personal conversion experience was the plain language of sermons, both those he heard and those he prepared. From his years at Cambridge, from Perkins and Sibbes, he came to recognize that preaching was the heart of the puritan faith, that the preaching experience was the most powerful means to conversion and renewal for his pastorate--saints and sinners--and for himself. Cotton was also beginning to realize that in an environment that was becoming increasingly hostile toward Puritanism, preaching was his most effective contribution to his Calvinist faith. When he accepted his first vicarship at St. Botolph's in Boston in 1612, the skills of diplomacy and preaching, and the growing Puritan faith he had found at Cambridge, would all be challenged.

Cotton found himself in a precarious position as pastor of St. Botolph's. He was respected as a clergyman among the hierarchy of the established church, yet he was also a member of the "spiritual brotherhood" of highly-educated, devout Puritan preachers who had bonded together during their years at Cambridge (Hall, Shepherd, 50). Like others in the Puritan brotherhood, Cotton had to face the dilemma of ecclesiastical polity. For the first years of his vicarship, he conformed to church practices by wearing vestments and rings, but by 1615, he had disregarded most established church practices (Ziff 39). Unlike many of his Puritan colleagues, however, Cotton's nonconformity was not questioned by church officials in his parish, most likely because the quality of his preaching was superior and he was popular with

his congregation (Ziff 41). He preached twice a week for twenty years in Old Boston, as a devout Calvinist who enjoyed a solid reputation among Puritans and Anglicans.

Cotton preached a farewell sermon to the passengers who travelled to New England with Puritan John Winthrop in 1629 (Rutman, Winthrop's 10). At the time of this sermon, Cotton was aware of an increasing intolerance toward Puritans among official church leaders. Two years later, after having had charges of heresy brought against him and after living in hiding from the official board of inquiry of Archbishop Laud, Cotton himself travelled to New England, reluctant in his decision to leave. In his letter of resignation to the Bishop of Lincoln he wrote: "howsoever I do highly prize and much prefer other men's judgment and learning and wisdom and piety, yet in things pertaining to God and his worship, still I must, as I ought, live by mine own faith, not theirs" (Correspondence, qtd. in Ziff 70). At the age of forty-eight, Cotton had made yet another diplomatic compromise in order to preserve his calling. He would preach his sermons to true believers in New England for the rest of his life.

Shortly after Cotton left for Massachusetts, unauthorized editions of several of his St. Botolph sermons began circulating in England, most likely written by some of his parishioners who had taken notes for home study during his sermons. Among them were several series or volumes of sermons which would remain popular with Puritans in England, and which would also become

popular in New England. The most published of these English volumes were God's Mercy Mixed with His Justice (1641), A Brief Exposition of the Whole Book of Canticles (1642), The Way of Life (1641), Christ the Fountain of Life (1651), and the text of the farewell sermon he delivered to Winthrop's fleet, God's Promise to His Plantation (1634). Cotton was certainly familiar with these pirated editions because he revised several of them into authorized editions during his years in New England. For example, he authorized a revised edition of A Brief Exposition of Canticles in 1648, in which he referred to the first, pirated edition in the preface by acknowledging to his readers that the first edition was published "without my privity" (qtd. in Emerson, Cotton 39).⁶

Most of Cotton's writings from his years in New England were published either during his lifetime or shortly after his death in 1652. In addition to many sermons, the other American writings--among them tracts on church polity, political treatises, letters, and some poetry--document many of the important issues and dilemmas of the first twenty years of Puritan settlement in the colony. The wide range of subjects on which he wrote suggests that he was an active participant in both church and secular issues, and that he contributed to both theological and political debates with the same deliberate

⁶Scholars have had difficulty determining the composition dates and the number of authorized texts from Cotton's years in England, particularly because of pirating. The most helpful explanation of the authorship problems and the best bibliographies of Cotton's English works are Emerson and Ziff.

scholarship that distinguished his sermons.⁷

Cotton was foremost a preacher, however, and the sermons he published outnumber by far any of his other writings (Selement, "preaching" 226; Emerson, Cotton 103). The subject matter of his sermons also reflects his interest in a variety of themes which were common to most Puritan preachers: the definition and process of salvation, the constant need for self-evaluation, the emphasis on devotion to one's calling, the definition of sin and total depravity, and a controlled sense of delight in God's creations and in Christ. His sermons also reflect his sensitivity to Biblical language, particularly to Old Testament passages, which he "delighted in unraveling" throughout the texts (Emerson 103).⁸

⁷Although many scholars rely on the texts of Cotton's theological tracts and political writings as source material for historical studies, few have made more than a passing reference to the literary value of these works. Heimert and Delbanco include one of Cotton's letters to Roger Williams in their anthology of Puritan literature, and they characterize the text as "one of the weakest of Cotton's performances" (Puritans 201). Only Emerson devotes entire chapters to the ecclesiastical and political writings, which he evaluates as "Cotton's best . . . distinguished by their intellectuality, their clarity, and their authority" (157).

⁸There are several excellent studies devoted to Cotton's aesthetics, compositional strategies, and sermon structure. Bercovitch evaluates Cotton's use of Biblical types in "Typology in Puritan New England," and concludes that "Cotton's use of typology . . . attests to an imaginative force in American Puritan writing which has too often gone unrecognized" (189). In "John Cotton's Aesthetic," Grabo suggests that Cotton had an "insistently organic" view of man's ability to create, and that his "images . . . are dynamic and malleable, or fluid" (7). Habegger compares the sermon forms of Cotton and Hooker in "Preparing the Soul for Christ," and attributes to Cotton's sermons "a sustained and logical movement from a page in the Bible to the heart of a listener" (353). In their introduction to Cotton in Salvation in New England, Phyllis and Nicholas Jones write that the style of many of Cotton's sermons is "joyfully

Cotton was most fascinated with a two-fold theme in his sermons: the significance of God's gift of grace and His covenant with man, and many of his best sermons are devoted to the delicate balance between God's grace and man's sinful nature. In an early English sermon, Cotton describes the relationship between God's grace and man's nature:

Where ever the heart of a man is sanctified by the Spirit of grace; where you have the life of sanctification in a Christian, you shall find variety of graces in them, some of them of such diversity and opposition one to another, that in nature the like temper is not to be found in one person at the same time . . . (Christ the Fountain 110).

As a Calvinist, Cotton understood the dynamic between God's grace and sinful man. Only God had the power to infuse into mortal, sinful man the grace of the Holy Spirit, and He chose His saints for reasons that no human could comprehend. No man deserved grace, yet out of mercy God sanctified some mortals. "For this reason," wrote Calvin, "we owe him glory, honor, and love" (Institutes II.8.3). His grace was a free gift, given to mortals who would never be capable of complete obedience. In return for this gift of grace, man owed his humility: "we must despair of ourselves and . . . after we descend to this humility and submission, the Lord will shine upon us . . ." (II.8.3).

rhetorical" (47). Other useful discussions of Cotton's sermons are in Brumm, American Thought and Religious Typology; Caldwell, "The Antinomian Language Controversy;" DeLamotte, "John Cotton and the Rhetoric of Grace;" Miller, The New England Mind; Rosenmeier, "New England's Perfection;" and Stoeber, "Nature, Grace and John Cotton."

In his sermons, Cotton stressed that constant faith, humility, and obedience, however flawed, were the price men paid for the chance that they might be instilled with grace. But a man could do more. All Puritans, particularly those who settled in New England, believed that they had to practice their faith, humility and obedience as a group. God's first covenant of grace had been not only with Abraham, but with his "seed" as well, which the Puritans interpreted to mean his descendants, his household, and his community. Cotton explained the duty of every Puritan who desired to be part of God's covenant: "If God make a Covenant, to be a God to thee and thine, then it is thy part to see it, that thy children and servants be Gods people" (The Way of Life 91). When a man promised faith to God, he promised for all of those around him, and was obliged to enforce as much sanctity within his household as he could. ⁹

Cotton was consistently adamant on this covenant in all of his writings. Just as man's nature was precariously balanced between evil and faithful, so was each household and each community. During the second decade of settlement, his interpretation of the covenant was challenged when the unregenerate Puritans and their children who were emigrating in

⁹Edmund Morgan discusses the significance of community, or "federal" covenants in The Puritan Family, where he suggests that the communal covenant of grace had a powerful influence on every aspect of the community: "This duty to enforce good behavior in the family was the germ of all political and ecclesiastical authority" (7). Miller also discusses covenant theology and its application in The New England Mind and Orthodoxy in Massachusetts.

larger and larger numbers were applying for membership in the churches, and some churches were beginning to relax the standards of their covenant to include more and more new members.¹⁰ Cotton was one of the ministers who urged strongly that the original covenant doctrine be maintained (Ziff 203-205). In one of the most powerful of his American sermons, The Covenant of God's Free Grace, Cotton explored the tension between sin and grace, between personal faith and community covenant. In characteristic fashion, he identified a compromise for himself and for his listeners within the sermon itself.

Cotton delivered The Covenant of God's Free Grace, Most Sweetly Unfolded, and Comfortably Applied to a Disquieted Soul in 1644, and revised it into a text which was published in 1645 (Emerson 102). Emerson suggests that God's Free Grace "may well be the most mature of Cotton's sermons." By 1644, Cotton had withstood both the debate with Williams and the crisis with Hutchinson, and this sermon demonstrates how he further reconciled his strict Calvinist approach toward the doctrine of church membership with the new, less stringent requirements of the New England churches (102). God's Free Grace reflects Cotton's willingness, however reluctant, to compromise with his community. "The sermon," writes Emerson, "is then another

¹⁰The best account of the church membership controversy and the relationship between the ministers' views and those of the civil authorities and congregations during the 1640s is Hall, Faithful Shepherd, 121-155. Also useful are Miller, Orthodoxy, and Morgan, Puritan Family. All three sources make reference to Cotton's views on church membership during this time.

testimony to Cotton's disappointment in the gradual changes in church polity and church membership in New England" (102).

The sermon also demonstrates Cotton's mastery of the Puritan sermon form and the diplomatic eloquence with which he presents sensitive, difficult doctrines of the faith. The compromises between man and God and between God and community which he articulates for his listeners are complex, and his sermon reflects this complexity in terms of the compositional strategies he uses throughout. In his efforts to define the commitments that man must make to God and to the community, Cotton gradually draws his audience into the compromise during the course of the sermon itself. By demanding that his listeners use their own judgment on the points he presents to them, he allows them to experience at the moment the very process that he is describing to them. Cotton's lesson in God's Free Grace is clear: a man (or a community) pays with constant labor for the chance to be saved. Cotton's method imitates his lesson: a man must use his own reasoning faculties to work through the language of the sermon in order to comprehend the terms of God's covenant of grace. A reading of the text itself confirms that Cotton expected, at times demanded, his audience to labor in order to understand the workings of the Lord.¹¹

¹¹There are two other studies of individual sermons by Cotton, both of which have contributed significantly to my own reading of God's Free Grace: Rosenmeier, "Clearing the Medium," and Toulouse, "'The Art of Prophesying': John Cotton and the Rhetoric of Election."

I have also relied on the critical approaches of Iser, Fish and Detweiler as models by which to read this sermon. Their

As his opening text, Cotton uses part of the last psalm of David from II Samuel 23:5:

Although my house be not so with God, yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow.¹²

Cotton opens the text first by explaining the historical context of the passage. David wrote these words near the end of his life, and because he was "near to heaven," his last Psalm was "most heavenly and sweet . . . and therefore full of heavenly matter, according to the strength of spirit he was grown into" (1). Cotton then divides the text into three parts, and he lists them with their corresponding reasons and uses:

1. David and his family had failed "in the many duties God calleth them unto," those duties being "Fear of God, Righteousness and Justice."

2. David took "support and comfort" from the "orderliness of Gods Covenant," which counteracted the corruptions of his family, who were "transitory, disordered, unsettled."

sensitivity to the response of the reader, or in this case the listener, has contributed significantly to my own reading of this text.

¹²All quotations from and references to this sermon are from John Cotton, The Covenant of God's Free Grace, Most Sweetly Unfolded, and Comfortably Applied to a Disquieted Soul, (London: Matthew Simmons, 1645). All spelling, capitalization, and punctuation, with the exception of biblical citations, have been left unchanged. All bold type indicates Cotton's emphases. I have modernized all abbreviations of biblical citations to conform to modern standards.

3. David, acknowledging the sins of his family, reaffirmed that "Gods Covenant to him" would "continue stedfast, firm and sure," and that this covenant would be "all his desire" (2-3).

Cotton is using a traditional three-part method here to break his opening text into smaller doctrinal units, and those three units are also distinguished by three points each. He now returns to the first doctrine, and he explains why David's house is unsettled by reviewing other biblical references to David which confirm that "when David looks back, and considers his own ways," he "findes many disorders and failings" (4). Cotton concludes his review of David's history with a directive to his audience: "therefore you may take it for granted, that no godly man doth keep so good a house, as to walk answerable in his calling to the means of grace offered unto him" (4).

Cotton now gives examples of the three duties which man, as a flawed mortal, cannot perform. He explains them in the order in which he listed them initially: fear of God, righteousness, and justice. No longer referring to David's house, he attributes these three failings to any and every family: "You shall finde pride and haughtinesse of minde and spirit . . . You shall finde drouzinesse of Spirit in the performance of good duties . . . You shall finde hardnesse of heart . . ." (4). He consoles his audience with the reminder that Christ's disciples suffered from these same failings, and includes himself as one of the guilty: "So likewise in our outward callings wee are failing many wayes in righteousnesse one towards another" (4).

Cotton's shift into the third-person plural is one of several characteristic compositional patterns which he will repeat throughout the remainder of the sermon. Whenever he discusses a man's calling, he uses the first person plural pronoun, thereby including himself, a minister, as one of the guilty. Whenever he makes reference to family relationships, he uses the third person plural construction, which allows him to distance himself and his audience from the relationship he is describing. He affects a sense of objectivity when, in describing some of the problems which families have, he allows his audience to "look in on" other families:

. . . notwithstanding all the sweet showers that fall upon them, and pleasant Sun-shines whereof they daily partake, yet some will continue as ignorant as at their first entrance into the family . . . as they have much knowledge, so likewise shall you see them defiled with much pride and vain-glory (5).

As he continues to explain why families cannot live up to God's Word, he continues to allow his audience to "watch" a family:

From a secret purpose and counsel God hath to have some unbelievers in every family; yea, in such places where you shall see most Religion used, and God most truly worshipped, there shall be some upon whom it shall be his pleasure to show his displeasure (6).

By the time Cotton has given all of the reasons for ungodliness in the home, he has made reference to at least four different families: David's family, Christ's family, the "family" of the ungodly in New England, (in which Cotton has included himself), and also a family of "everymen." When he

begins to explain the ways in which his congregation can use the examples of all of these families, he returns to a first person plural construction, and once again, he and his congregation are all part of one great family group which includes every family he has mentioned:

Learn wee then hereby, every one of us to judge themselves, and our families, and to teach every person to judge themselves . . . If David were not able to say that his house were perfect with God, what then may we say? We have not the means which he had. . . and therefore we are to judge our selves for our uncleannesse . . . From this generall reformation of families, God may be pleased to spare the whole Land . . . (8).

Throughout this first third of the sermon, Cotton has forced his listeners to consider many families, not the least of which is their own. Gradually, he has brought them from the Old Testament, through the Gospel, into the present, and he has implored them to "judge themselves" and their relationships to those around them. The environment that Cotton has created is historical and contemporary, Scriptural and literal for his audience. They must consider their godly family, and, by the conclusion of this section, they must evaluate their relationships to those of their families who are most likely also listening to this sermon. In asking them to use their judgment, Cotton is also forcing them to use their imaginations and their memories. His strategy in this section demands that his listeners respond actively--and emotionally--to his advice. He is telling them: "Although none of us is perfect, in order to find God's grace, we must try to live by the rules and be aware

of those around us." He is also, at the moment, forcing them to become aware of themselves and their relationships to those around them.

Cotton now refers back to his original three doctrinal points, and he begins to explore the second of them, David's reliance on his covenant with God. In this section, Cotton uses another compositional strategy which complements his message, and which again forces his listeners to imitate the lesson they are hearing.

He begins opening the second doctrine by reminding his audience of the text from II Samuel: "God hath made an everlasting Covenant with him, ordered in all things, and sure" (11). He then lists four questions which are "needfull to know":

1. What is the Covenant David comforts himself in?
2. How it is said to be ordered in all things?
3. How it is said to be everlasting?
4. How it is said to be sure?

Cotton uses the same pattern with these questions as he has already used with the three major doctrinal sections he outlined at the beginning of the sermon. He divides each of his answers into smaller points, and discusses each group of points before going on to the next consecutive group. For example, in order to answer the first question, Cotton gives a six-point answer in which he distinguishes the covenant of grace from the covenant of works.

He explains that the covenant of works was given to Adam and

his posterity, but when Adam sinned against God, the covenant was forever broken (12). When Abraham accepted God's merciful covenant of grace, God knew that man could never be perfectly obedient, but that He "doth accept perfect obedience in Christ for us, though we cannot perform perfect satisfaction . . . God accepts at our hands a willing minde" (12). Cotton concludes his six-part answer by reminding his listeners that the covenant of grace "cannot be broken . . . and though on our parts it may be broken, yet because Christ hath in it keeping, it shall never be so broken" (12).

His answer, a six-part comparison between the two covenants, represents his use of Ramean logic. By comparing the covenant of grace to the covenant of works, he is able to show that the covenant of grace can only exist because the covenant of works no longer exists.¹³ He accomplishes two goals with his reasoning: he defines the covenant of grace, and he denies any existence of the covenant of works.

Throughout his exposition of the second doctrine, Cotton relies on logic. All four of his questions, which are themselves ordered to reflect the original biblical citation, call for

¹³The best review of the use of comparisons in Ramean logic is in the introduction to Miller and Johnson, who point out that an argument in Ramean terms is most often put into the form of a question which requires "innate, a priori knowledge" (35). They offer an instructive example: a Ramist would ask "the world was either made or not, which?" He would answer, of course, that "if it was not made, then there was no cause for its being, there is no design in it, no end for which it exists, and any man knows that these are absurd conclusions. Ergo, the world was made" (35).

answers which link logically, one to the next. He also employs an equally Ramean/Puritan practice in this section: the use of a short-answer catechism. His answer to his fourth question, "how is it said to be sure?" is an example:

But why is it called a sure Covenant?

In Gods eternal purpose it was first framed.

But why is it said to be a sure Covenant?

Because God is unchangeable himself.

How may the Spirit be said to make it sure?

In the sure word of promise that God hath made.

Cotton explains his second doctrinal point entirely by pointing to the sound reasoning behind the covenant of grace. Each answer is accompanied by an appropriate scriptural reference, which he uses to document his answer, and which in turn leads to another related question. As he asks his own question, his listeners must anticipate his answer. When he gives his answer, his audience anticipates his next question. Any Puritan layman, including a child, would recognize the model of a catechism that Cotton was using, and would be able to recognize the Biblical citations to which he has referred.

In his first doctrinal section, he had asked his listeners to evaluate their own emotions and family ties. His second section is distinguished by logic and scriptural language, and requires that his listeners rely on their knowledge of the Bible and their reasoning faculties. This is more than an intellectual exercise, however. The covenant of which he speaks is itself an

example of logic and order: the covenant will bring order to the hearts and lives of those who live within it. Cotton explains:

This Covenant is ordered in regard to the parts, in the Covenant God promiseth:

First, Grace.

Secondly, pardon of Sin.

Thirdly, subduing our rebellions.

Fourthly, outward blessings (15).

Again, Cotton's method reflects the lesson he is teaching:

"though your wayes and hearts are unsettled, and disordered so, yet the Covenant of God doth remain sure and firm" (18). The scriptural language and ordered points he is asking his listeners to consider is his proof in his argument for the covenant. God has supplied us with all of the necessary language and reasoning faculties we need to live within his covenant, Cotton says, and now we must use those faculties. The covenant of grace "is written in the flexible tables of the hearts," and allows those who accept the gift of grace the chance to use their minds and hearts, to "stretch" themselves to the fullest in performing their duties before God (12). Again, Cotton has asked his audience to experience the point of his doctrine at the same time that he is describing it.

He ends his second doctrinal lesson with a straightforward, simple imperative to his audience. This covenant is "made up between God and a good Christian." When God offers his covenant, "he is ours and we are his" (20). Cotton advises:

You must herein resolve to take heed of all sin, labour to perform every good duty, and be sorry you can do no better . . . You must labour to bring your selves into a good

family . . . and give up your mindes, wills
and affections unto God . . . (20).

His audience has already begun to take his advice by "labouring" over his logical points, and by giving up their minds to the complexities of his lesson.

In his explication of the final doctrine from II Samuel, "for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow," Cotton returns to the story of David to prove that it is only man's "desire" that leads him to grace. His lesson is "evident in the Text, it is all his will, will comprehends the desire and the delight of a man; so that a man needs nothing more to salvation" (21).

Again, Cotton is using a strategy he has used before. His reasoning is Ramean and a priori: any man's desire for grace leads to grace because God makes a covenant with anyone who asks for it. This third doctrine does not continue to be a logical listing by Cotton the legalist, however. He uses simple language and simple, general examples at the end of the sermon in order to encourage and reassure his listeners that they are capable of making a covenant with God.

Cotton does not divide his final doctrine into small points. His organization is simple and standard: doctrine, then reasons, then uses. He uses relatively few biblical references, with the exception of the original scripture from II Samuel. He also uses the pronoun "we" almost exclusively, particularly in passages where he is describing the rewards man receives when he consents to work toward a covenant of grace:

Children, beauty, strength, gifts may be desired, if they come under this Covenant (22).

God delights in us, when we are in his Covenant, his Covenant reacheth to his Church, and wee being members of that Church (22).

If we are in this Covenant of Grace, we may then lawfully comfort our selves in the enjoyment of all other good things (23).

cotton reassures his listeners that they will find consolation as a family if they live under this covenant:

Howsoever God deals with our families, yet the Covenant of Grace must be to us the satisfying of our desires (24).

How ever God deals with us in outward things, yet his Covenant is a certain ground for our eternall inheritance (25).

The conclusion to the sermon is forward looking and joyful:

Rejoyce we then in this Covenant, for it is an everlasting Covenant; and let us make it our chiefe happinesse, that wee have a part in it, though wee and others seem no to ourselves to grow, yet wee shall grow so far as God sees it meet for us to grow, although we for our parts perceive it not (27).

The relatively simple composition of Cotton's third doctrine affords his audience a kind of release, a chance to listen more easily to his words. Once again, Cotton's method mimics what he is teaching: those who work to understand God will find great satisfaction and comfort in their work, and will be rewarded.

Part of any Puritan preacher's task was to "make the word flesh," to make the lessons from the Bible come to life. During the sermon, Cotton brings the scripture to life several times by

acting as storyteller, lawgiver, and comforter. He also assumes the roles of family man, worker, and sinner. His roles help him not only to prove his points, but they help him to effect certain immediate responses, also instructive, in his audience.

Through his roles, he presents different choices and suggests alternatives to his audience, but he never tells his listeners specifically what to choose. His role playing allows him to be a representative for his listeners, who considers the options he has along with his listeners. Certain of his choices--whether or not to communicate with his family, whether or not to read the Bible, whether or not to consent to the covenant--become progressively more attractive and real as he presents them. For example, he begins as a detached narrator who presents a story about a family, he consents to become a member of the family, he then contributes to his family's welfare by explaining the law, and finally he finds the strength to comfort and encourage the rest of his family. Because he repeats patterns of pronoun shifts, logical reasoning, and the use of Bible passages, all familiar sermon characteristics to his audience, his listeners become increasingly able to anticipate not only his roles and his choices, but their own as well. The personas and situations he creates represent, by the end of the sermon, a challenge to be imitated by his audience.¹⁴

¹⁴Toulouse addresses a similar pattern in Cotton's God's Mercie, a sermon in which Cotton was "fragmenting his discourse, disrupting the sermon's progressive movement, and using scriptural language he claimed was 'playne' . . . The preacher . . . should not limit the possible meanings of his text in order

Cotton's manipulation of his audience's capacities is skillful and subtle, and attests to his own talent as a preacher. The roles he chooses also reveal his attitude toward the needs of his audience. We can identify certain characteristics of his audience and his community from the roles he assumes for their benefit.

Cotton leaves his audience with a seemingly unrelated, curious last thought in God's Free Grace: "It shall be ill with Rome and her adherents; the Covenant of Works shall be required at their hands" (27). This last line is really not so curious, however. Cotton leaves his listeners with a reminder and a veiled warning here: to rely on one's works alone for salvation, as the papists do, is to guarantee damnation for oneself and one's family. This warning would certainly remind many in Cotton's audience of the serious tensions within their community which had resulted from the "Hutchinson crisis" of less than ten years before.

Hutchinson had accused the established clergy of preaching a covenant of works to their congregations.¹⁵ Cotton, whom

to reduce God's will to a single moral truth easily grasped by those eager to find assurance . . . Cotton does not dictate meaning. Rather, he presents his listeners with Scripture's own language, offering them its nuances rather than fixing God's intentions" (294). My reading of God's Free Grace supports Toulouse's observations.

¹⁵The best accounts of the Hutchinson crisis and Cotton's role in the controversy are Battis, Saints and Sectaries, Hall, The Antinomian Controversy, and Rutman, Winthrop's Boston.

Hutchinson had followed to New England in order to be a member of his congregation, had been involved in every aspect of Hutchinson's controversy with the community. Until she and her followers had claimed to be in direct communication with God, and to have been able to tell with absolute certainty that they were saved, Cotton had been a champion of her rights. He had retreated from Hutchinson when she began teaching this heresy, and during the years after her banishment to Rhode Island in 1636, Cotton had written and had preached very carefully about the distinctions between a covenant of grace and a covenant of works, always pointing out, as he does in God's Free Grace, that the covenant of works had absolutely no place in the faith of a member of God's community.

Hutchinson's antinomian teachings had riveted the community. Her prosecutors had called her an "anarchist" who had encouraged others to confront their ministers. The ministers, including Cotton, were stunned at the inaccuracies and superficialities of the Hutchinsonians' teachings, and during the years following her removal, had increased their efforts to teach the correct doctrine and to restore "order" to God's New England community (Rutman, Winthrop's 126-27). In God's Free Grace, Cotton is most pointed and most strict in his second doctrine where he is defining the terms of the covenant of grace. He is the authoritative legal voice, who supplies all the necessary documentation and evidence to support his case. His listeners must be particularly attentive during this part of the sermon in

order to understand the terms he is laying out for them. The difficult, dense composition of this section reveals his underlying message to them. Labor to understand the terms of this covenant well, he tells them, or you will not be able to distinguish grace from works, and you and yours will be damned for your ignorance. Especially for Cotton and his congregation, who had endured the Hutchinson crisis of faith in their community, the covenant of works was a sin to avoid.

Not all of Cotton's congregation would remember the Hutchinson affair, however, and Cotton's warning was also a new lesson for his new parishioners, many of whom were not church members. By 1644, Cotton's First Church of Boston had a congregation of around one thousand, only half of whom were members (Rutman, Winthrop's 195). Cotton's sermon demonstrates that he is aware of an audience made up of church members and "strangers." He creates an "every family" not unlike many of the families who sat before him, families he did not know, and he gives this family typical problems and typical reactions:

Husbands cannot bring in their wives, nor wives their husbands, Parents their children, nor their servants . . . and when they have brought them forward in any good way, they have many times such fears and doubting of their estates, that they are ready to forsake all and fall back again (5).

Cotton also appeals to those people who may not have been as well versed in biblical language as were his own parishioners. Whenever he discusses how a person might work toward being within the covenant, he uses his "every family," or he uses the family

of his community ("we"), and he refers to few scriptural passages. Most often, when he speaks of a family's problems in his first doctrine, and the solution to the problem in his second doctrine, he refers only to the words of David from II Samuel. Even those who had never heard that passage of scripture (and those were probably few), could follow his examples.

Cotton was well aware of the nature of his audience. During the years that he had been preaching in Boston, the town had grown from a village with a population of three hundred to a city of twelve or thirteen thousand (179). By 1644, Boston had a population that included people of all classes, including petty thieves, embezzlers, and other criminals (225). Many new emigrants had come to Boston to work in the growing shipbuilding industry, and had no apparent religious affiliations. Only two thirds of all families belonged to any church at all (193-94).

Cotton directs much of his advice in God's Free Grace to parishioners he does not know, but to those in his audience who might want to profess their faith and join the church. He advises them to review their family histories to see whether or not any of their ancestors had covenanted with God: "If you can say, you have known some of your ancestors in this Covenant, and you have not refused it, but laid claim unto it . . . it is a certain signe this Covenant reacheth you" (15). For those who do not know the status of their ancestors, Cotton has another alternative. He suggests that they "apprentice" themselves to God, that they agree to "be the Lords servants" and that they

"bring" themselves into a "good family" (20). Cotton's approach to the many options of his congregation speaks to his awareness of the nature of that audience. He gives all of his listeners, members, potential members, and strangers, alternatives that will allow them to join the covenant and have the "experience of a Christian man's life" (20).

Cotton assumed that not everyone who was listening to him could understand the basic religious doctrine of the covenant of grace. He may have assumed that some of his parishioners were still confused by what they knew from the Hutchinson hearings, or he thought that some had never been taught the tenets of the faith. The vigor with which he addresses the logical implications of his text indicates that he also judged his audience to be willing to try to follow his reasoning. And, his final warning about the Roman Catholic Church stands as a reminder to those who he felt might not have understood the seriousness of his earlier lesson.

Cotton also considered his audience to be somewhat provincial and too complacent in their religious lives. Throughout his text, as he forces them to use their imaginations, their memories, or their reasoning, he always asks them to "labor." The wide range of topics he presents, from a family in crisis, to the words of David, Abraham, or Christ, to a reference to Rome, all widen the scope of his lesson and test both the minds and the hearts of those listening. Indeed, he uses the

word "labor" liberally in every doctrinal lesson he presents, most often in the "uses" section, when he offers a broad range of alternatives for his listeners to consider.¹⁶

The straightforward movement of his sermon indicates that Cotton assumed that his audience consented to all that he told them. As intricately composed as it is, never does Cotton repeat his lessons. He develops his points sequentially, and moves on when he has completed each point, which suggests that he is confident that his audience has comprehended and is ready to hear more.

Cotton assumed that his listeners were concerned about the welfare of their families, both in their earthly lives and in their spiritual lives. His entire sermon is a lesson in family communications, and since most Puritan families attended services together, his advice to families, both members and non-members, took on singular significance. His listeners might have asked themselves some very pointed questions: Is my family within this covenant? Are we protected under God's grace? How can I help my family? How can I protect my children?

The 1640s saw the beginning of a monumental change in the composition of the churches in New England, and concern for one's family was at the heart of this change. Cotton's sermon reflects

¹⁶Habegger points out that it was typical of Cotton in his sermons to bring "an amazing range of subjects and details into the picture" (351). For this reason, Cotton's sermons "give evidence of a mind that is concerned with all of the provinces of theology" (351). I would add that Cotton demanded the same broad scope from his listeners.

the growing concern in the community over the membership status of family members. Were one's children church members? Were they protected under the covenant and under church laws? Those in Cotton's congregation were growing increasingly concerned about these questions, as his stress on this issue confirms.

It would be eighteen years after Cotton's delivery of God's Free Grace that the Puritan community would have struggled toward an uneasy resolution of this problem, which would be called the "Half-Way Covenant." This new covenant would allow the unconverted children of church members to retain their membership in the church, even if they had never experienced conversion.¹⁷ By 1662, the year that the Half-Way Covenant would be official church policy, Cotton would be dead. But in 1644, the problem of the status of second-generation Puritan members had already surfaced, no more apparent than in Cotton's approach to family membership in this sermon.

The most striking characteristic of Cotton's sermon is his constant emphasis on the merciful nature of God. As his title suggests, God's grace was free to those who wished to have it. The language, composition, and roles which Cotton uses throughout

¹⁷Most scholars agree that the "Half-Way Covenant" marked the "beginning of the end" of the Puritan theocracy in New England. Morgan's analysis is particularly apt: "In spite of their theological advantages and in spite of all the preaching directed at them, the children did not get converted As a result the number of full members in the churches gradually shrank Before the end of the [seventeenth] century the Puritan system was tottering" (Family 185). The best summaries of the Half-Way Covenant are Morgan, The Puritan Family and Visible Saints, and Pettit.

the sermon reflect this emphasis. With the major exception of Cotton's final warning to his listeners about the covenant of works, nowhere does he make reference to God's potential wrath toward unregenerate man. He never outlines the tortures of hell, nor does he use Bible stories which point to the wrath of God. This is a sermon of hope, intended to comfort the "disquieted" souls to whom he has referred in his title.

Cotton's most significant assumption, by his very silence on this most terrifying aspect of his religion, is that he is speaking to people who understand only too well the language of doubt, and whose fears in the power of the Lord can be overwhelming and potentially incapacitating. He assumes that his listeners know that God is as swift in his punishment toward the sinners of the world as he is merciful. Cotton chooses to encourage all of his listeners, no matter what their fears, to transcend their doubts by accepting God's gift of grace.

Perhaps this final assumption--that his listeners might find reassurance rather than terror in his sermon--represents the most powerful controlling strategy that Cotton uses in God's Free Grace. The Puritan faith that Cotton and his listeners shared was characterized by a language of longing and of loss. Most of the faithful spent their lives in doubt. If they were unclear or unlearned on other aspects of their faith, they did understand that they would never know if they were in God's favor, and they assumed that they were destined to hell fire. Cotton's approach in God's Free Grace suggests that he realized their fears and

that he recognized that some of them were capable of languishing in the depths of despair. His listeners knew that God was swift in his retribution against the sins of man. Cotton wanted to come as close as he could, in a variety of ways, to reminding them that the Lord was as powerfully merciful in his justice as he was swift in his wrath.

We have little clue to Cotton's delivery style, but his popularity, both in England and in New England, must have been partially due to his own presence in the pulpit.¹⁸ His own colleagues considered him to be a great preacher. John Wilson, another Boston preacher, wrote that Cotton "preaches with such authority, demonstration, and life, that methinks . . . I hear the Lord Jesus Christ speaking in my heart" (qtd. in Mather, III: 25-26). We know that Cotton was particularly deliberate when he prepared sermons, and that he went into solitude for several hours before delivering them (III: 64). God's Free Grace reflects such deliberation and thought, and shows his awareness of not only his own changing role as preacher, but of the emotional and rational capacities of an audience who had diverse capabilities and needs.

Perhaps Cotton was revered during his lifetime because he

¹⁸Ziff points out that membership in Cotton's church grew faster and larger than any other in New England during his years as preacher, and although the large numbers "were in large part to be accounted for by the tremendous rate of immigration," Cotton's "parishioners and colleagues realized that a great part of the success of Boston church was the result of his preaching" (252).

asked of his congregation the same high standards which he set for himself. God's Free Grace attests to his superior command of language and theology, and those hearing him must have recognized that he expected a great deal from them. The example he set, both in the words he spoke and in his thoroughness with doctrine, must have been inspiring to his listeners. Like all of the best preachers of the faith, Cotton moved his listeners in many ways, constantly laboring to make them aware of their own innate gifts, and always sensitive to their deepest doubts and their most profound fears.

In his eulogistic biography, Norton characterized Cotton the scholar and teacher:

Though he was a constant student, yet he had communion with God . . . He had a deep sight into the mystery of God's grace, and man's corruption, and large apprehensions of these things . . . he was an expositor . . . not inferior to any . . . he was . . . that great motto so much wondered at, *Labore & constantia*, Labor and constancy (46).

To view Cotton's New England from within the text of The Covenant of God's Free Grace allows us to see his community from the perspective of a preacher who knew his congregation's strengths and weaknesses, hopes and fears. The same constancy with which he approached his sermon guided his audience, and the same labor with which he preached encouraged them to work. Cotton himself had commented on the work that lay before him and his colleague Thomas Hooker in a letter he had written back to England when he had first arrived in Massachusetts: "What

service myself and Brother Hooker might do to our people . . . is . . . enough to fill both our hands" (qtd. in Heimert and Delbanco, 95). Cotton was correct. He and Hooker would labor diligently in their efforts to preach the true faith in New England, both for the same reasons, but each in his own way.

CHAPTER III

Journey into the "Melting Heart":

Thomas Hooker's The Christians Two Chiefe Lessons

In 1626, the Reverend Thomas Hooker delivered a sermon to his congregation in Surrey, England, in which he asked them to consider the spiritual state of England. His question to them was an eloquent echo of John of Gaunt's deathbed soliloquy in Shakespeare's The Tragedy of Richard the Second:

. . . for whence comes it, whence is it, that the Lord hath had an eye unto me above all the rest, when the fire of God's fury hath flamed and consumed all the country round about us . . . when the fire hath burnt up all; yet this little cottage, this little England, this span of ground, that this should not be searched? (Foure Learned and Godly Treatises 115-116).

This passage not only attests to Hooker's sensitivity to the language of the poetry of his homeland, but it also includes an example of a characteristic feature of his sermon style, his reference to fire and heat. A minister, wrote Hooker, had to "set fire on the hearts of men to melt their souls" (Souls Implantation 38).

Listeners in Hooker's congregations, whether in the "little cottage" of England, or in the wilderness in Connecticut, could never mistake the efforts their preacher made on their behalf. The lesson he taught most often was that God's people had to melt with desire and with fear to prepare themselves for the

experience of conversion. The intensity of faith for which he so often pleaded in his sermons reflected the intensity with which he preached and wrote throughout his career.

Hooker was born in Leicestershire in 1586, the son of a land overseer.¹ His family was probably sympathetic to the Elizabethan Puritan "revolutionaries" who lived in the area. Hooker's sister would eventually marry a Puritan sympathizer and move to New England in 1630, and one of his first cousins would also marry a notorious Puritan radical from Leicestershire (Shuffleton, Hooker, 6-7).

Hooker attended the local grammar school and entered Queen's College, Cambridge, in 1604. During his undergraduate years, he distinguished himself in the study of logic, both Aristotelian and Ramean. In 1608 he received his B.A., and a year later he became a fellow in Emmanuel College, where he continued to study logic and to concentrate in theology. By the time he took his M.A. in 1611, he had become active in the religious life at Emmanuel, having served as lecturer and catechist to the fellows.

¹The only recent full-length study of Hooker's life is Shuffleton, Thomas Hooker (1977). Cotton Mather devotes a chapter to Hooker's life in Magnalia Christi Americana, and there are also two nineteenth-century biographies: Walker, Thomas Hooker (1891), and Hooker, The Life of Thomas Hooker (1849). Other scholars have made references to the details of Hooker's contributions to the Puritan communities in England and New England: Battis, Saints and Sectaries; Hall, The Faithful Shepherd; Miller, Errand into the Wilderness; and Pettit, The Heart Prepared. The best account of Hooker's political influence in New England is Ahlstrom, "Thomas Hooker--Puritanism and Democratic Citizenship."

sometime between 1611 and 1618, the year he left Emmanuel, Hooker experienced a conversion to the Puritan faith (15-19).

Unlike Cotton, whose conversion had come quickly and had manifested itself in a sudden, stunning change in his preaching style, Hooker's conversion progressed slowly. Like Cotton, however, he left no first-hand account of his own conversion, nor did he refer to his personal acceptance of the faith in his writings. His first biographer gave a characteristically dramatic account of Hooker's conversion in the Magnalia:

It pleased the spirit of God very powerfully to break into the soul of this person, with a sense of his being exposed unto the just wrath of Heaven, as filled him with most unusual degrees of horror, and anguish, which broke not only his rest, but his heart also, and caused him to cry out, "While I suffer thy terrors, O Lord, I am distracted!" (Mather I, 333).

Mather goes on to explain that during his agonizing struggle towards grace, Hooker's "reasoning would fail him, he was able to do nothing" (333). For a man who was a master at logic, to be without his reasoning skills for long periods of time must have been a supreme trial, and certainly left a lasting imprint on the preacher Hooker.

The conversion experience of Hooker and his fellow ministers may have been mysterious. It therefore became a worthy subject of later Puritan folklore, precisely because these preachers could not explain their experiences in rational terms. As real as these conversion experiences were, they were irrational and emotional, and defied concrete explanation. During the years

that he struggled through his own conversion, Hooker had to deny his own earthly capacities and, eventually, he had to restructure his attitudes toward these capacities according to God's law and God's will. The helplessness, sense of loss, and radical shifts in spiritual intensity which he experienced over this three-year period, as difficult as they must have been to describe, were to become the heart of all of his preaching: "His later attempts to explain what had happened to him became the sermons he preached to audiences for whom, he hoped, the same experience was happening or about to happen" (Shuffleton, Hooker 23).

Hooker's first position away from Cambridge was that of private rector to a wealthy estate in Essex. During the six to eight years that he attended the family there, his interest in the conversion experience of a Christian soul became more pronounced.

The lady of the manor, Mrs. Drake, was a disturbed young woman who, according to her biographer, "made strange desparate speeches" about her eternal damnation, and often became hysterical (Hartwell, qtd. in Shuffleton 30). Shortly before Hooker arrived to live with the family, she had attempted suicide, and, on the advice of physicians and ministers, her husband entrusted her to the young Hooker's pastoral care.

Although she had been advised by other ministers, one of whom had diagnosed her as being in the power of "the devill's Rhetorike," she responded positively to Hooker's methodical approach to her (34). Hooker would listen to her rantings, and

then would catechize with her quietly, slowly, and by using simple logic on the points of her distress. As he taught her the tenets of his faith over and over again, she became less frantic. Her hysteria subsided as she became accustomed to Hooker's "new answering methode," which, within three years' time, allowed her to find peace (36).

The "answering methode" and gradual indoctrination to the Christian faith which Hooker used with Mrs. Drake soon distinguished him among other clergymen as an exceptionally patient, apt pastor. His experience also led him several years later to publish his first religious tract, The Poore Doubting Christian Drawne Unto Christ, in which he outlined the process by which an obsessed or ignorant sinner (like Mrs. Drake) might "take hold of Christ" (347). This was the theme with which Hooker had been struggling since the years of his own conversion, and working with a challenging subject had only encouraged his interest in the specific stages of conversion: "Throughout the rest of his life his sermons would be directed over and over to Christians in trouble or in doubt about the way to Christ" (Shuffleton 66).

Hooker left the Drake estate sometime in the mid-1620s, and spent several years preaching in the small villages of his native Leicestershire. When William Laud came to power and began interrogating and imprisoning Puritan divines in 1629, Hooker left the pulpit and retreated to the country, where he kept a grammar school for children from the surrounding towns (121-128).

venturing out occasionally to preach, he was eventually served with interrogation papers from the Archbishop, and with a charge of heresy against him, and a warrant out for his arrest, he fled to Holland in 1631 (133).

Hooker spent only two years in Holland. Originally, he had considered travelling to New England, but had decided to go to Delft for several reasons. The trip was less difficult than the long passage to New England, and he also continued to hope that Laud would be replaced and he and his Puritan colleagues could return to England. His time in Delft was difficult. He complained in a letter to Cotton that the damp weather irritated his "ague," and that, although he seemed to be able to preach as he wished, he could not agree on points of church policy with the other English refugees there (150-156).²

Sometime in 1632, Hooker received correspondence from some of his parishioners from Leicestershire who had left England and had founded a new town in New England on the shores of the Charles River. At their urging, he decided to return to England only long enough to make arrangements to travel to New England. He made the eight-week voyage to America in the company of John Cotton and his congregation, and the party arrived in New Boston in 1633 (156-158).

²Hooker's years in Holland are discussed in Bush, The Writings of Thomas Hooker; Shuffleton; and Williams, "The Life of Thomas Hooker in England and Holland." Hooker is mentioned in other general studies of the English religious communities in Holland: Carter, The English Reformed Church in Amsterdam; and Stearnes, Congregationalism in the Dutch Netherlands.

Hooker's reputation as a powerful minister had preceded him to New England, and almost from the day he arrived in Newtown (later to be called "Cambridge") Massachusetts, Hooker was frustrated by the demands put upon him by the civil magistrates of New England. He was asked by Governor Winthrop to help settle a dispute over land, and he was asked to help decide the fate of the "rebellious" Roger Williams, who had returned from Plymouth to challenge the authorities one more time on their rights to Indian lands (Polishook 16-18, Shuffleton, 180-188). Hooker, as the pastor of the Newtown church, assumed his role to be that of minister and not of civil arbitrator. He had outlined the duties he had toward his pastorate in a tract on church polity, Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline:

By vertue of that engagement by which I am tyed, and that power which I have received, I stand charged in a most peculiar manner, to prevent all taint of sin in any Member of the Society that either it may never be committed; or if committed, it may speedily be removed, and the spirituall good of the whole preserved (33).

Hooker considered himself to be a pastor, and his primary concern was with the spiritual lives of his parishioners. The outside concerns had forced him to ignore some of his duties, and within two years of his arrival, he and his congregation in Newtown were petitioning the magistrates for a new site for their "covenanted church" so that they could practice their faith without further interference (Shuffleton 198).

Governor Winthrop described the request for new lands by Hooker's community:

At the General Court in the spring of 1634, those of Newtown complained of straitness for want of land . . . and desired leave of the court to look out either for enlargement or removal, which was granted; whereupon they sent men to see Agawam and Merrimack, [Connecticut River valley] and gave out they would remove (Papers I, 124).

Although Hooker and the congregation moved because they wanted larger and better lands, there were probably other reasons for their departure from Newtown. The controversies, from the petty to the serious, had put a strain on the community, who regarded themselves as covenanted together in a godly community, and who did not want interference from any outside parties. Although Hooker preached the doctrine of the federal covenant in much the same way as Cotton did, stressing the responsibilities of one man toward another, he also stressed the independence of one congregation from another.³ He had reminded his congregation in a sermon: "Am I my Brother's keeper? Yes, thou art, or else thou art his murtherer" (Application 213). His community wanted to remove itself from outside problems in order to maintain its own covenant with God (Miller, Errand 31-35; Shuffleton 208).

William Hubbard, an early New England historian, suggested

³"Congregationalism" was the practice of all of the Puritan churches in first-generation New England. Each church was an autonomous body, which acknowledged Christ as its head. The church government--the elders and ministers--had the right to decide all church policy, dependent only on their own judgments and guided by scripture. The best discussions of congregationalism in early New England are Foster, "New England and the Challenge of Heresy;" Miller, "Puritan State and Puritan Society," and Orthodoxy in Massachusetts; Morgan, Visible Saints; Rutman, "The Mirror of Puritan Authority;" and Simpson, Puritanism in Old and New England.

another reason for Hooker's departure to the wilderness: "Two such eminent stars, such as were Mr. Cotton and Mr. Hooker, both of the first magnitude, though of differing influence, could not well continue in one and the same orb" (qtd. in Shuffleton 208). During the years of the Williams controversy, Hooker may have realized that he did not always agree with the stricter church policies that Cotton and the other New England ministers espoused toward church membership, and a move away from the rest of the New England clergy seemed to be the best course to take. (210). Although he would return to Boston to mediate during Anne Hutchinson's trial for heresy, he kept his distance from the established authorities and remained outside the sphere of Cotton's influence for the rest of his career (Miller, Errand 35; Shuffleton 209).⁴ Hooker and his company moved to their new plantation, "Hartford," in 1636, out of the shadow of the growing metropolis of Boston, and away from the political pressures of the civil authorities. Hooker was a preacher, not a politician, and his willingness to move further into the New England wilderness attests to his commitment to the welfare of his spiritual family, the regenerate and unregenerate, in his congregation. "Every faithfull Minister," wrote Hooker, "is the father of the people and they are his children" (Preparation 73).

Hooker's congregation was particularly close to their minister, perhaps because he was truly a pastor, who spent hours

⁴Further discussion of the Hutchinson controversy and trial can be found in the present study in Chapter II, 35-36 and 60-61; and Chapter IV, 117-118.

with troubled individuals who needed to discuss their doubts and fears (213-214). He had a strong interest in helping the unconverted, a policy he knew was different from the more legal, strict policies of his New England colleagues. He felt a strong need to appeal to the most challenging element in his congregation--those who had never been reborn through conversion--and he justified his interest through Scripture: "The chiefe aime and scope of our Savior was to provide for the speciall good of his elect," he wrote, "because those his elect were mingled here with the wicked . . . because it is impossible for the eye of man to search into heart secrets, [we] must judge of men according to the lawes and limites of rationally charity" (Survey II, 2).

Hooker's strong interest in the deepest problems of the unregenerate listeners in his congregation was reflected in the religious tracts he wrote and the sermons he delivered and published during his years in Connecticut. Like other preachers of his generation, he had considerable interest in his own church's policies, and wrote about such issues as church membership and the relationship between civil and church authority. He always insisted that the heart of his community should be in God's Word, and that the sermon was the only means to a godly community of converted saints. From the time he arrived in Hartford until he died there of smallpox in 1647, Hooker preached and wrote with vigor and clarity to saints and sinners alike. Although he wrote and published on other church

issues, most often he preached and wrote out sermons on the one subject which he had found significant since his own conversion to the faith: the steps a true believer had to follow to prepare himself for the overwhelming experience of conversion to the faith.

By the time Hooker had settled in Hartford, his earliest writing on preparation, The Poore Doubting Christian, the religious tract he had written after his years with the disturbed Mrs. Drake, had already been republished and reissued five times.⁵ His own parishioners were most likely familiar with this tract, which was a comprehensive yet detailed account of the steps one had to take in order to be converted to the faith, and they would be able to recognize these same steps in the sermons they heard him preach in Hartford.

As a master logician, Hooker had divided his study of the "application of redemption," (a term he coined and would later use as the title of a collection of published sermons), into interrelated sections, and he had given each section a descriptive label. The pattern he sets out in The Poore Doubting

⁵The Poore Doubting Christian was not only published five times during Hooker's lifetime, but was published by five different printers. The texts, some of which differ in significant ways, have been problematic for Hooker scholars. The best studies of the textual discrepancies in the texts are Bush, "The Growth of Thomas Hooker's The Poor Doubting Christian," and "Establishing the Hooker Canon;" Herget, "Preaching and Publication--Chronology and the Style of Thomas Hooker's Sermons," and "The Transcription and Transmission of the Hooker Corpus;" and Shuffleton, "Thomas Prince and his Edition of Thomas Hooker's Poor Doubting Christian."

Christian serves as an instructive guide to the patterns of all his subsequent sermons.

Hooker first divides the process of salvation, the "application of redemption," into two large sections, the preparation of the sinner to receive grace, and the "implantation," or "ingrafting," of the new, humbled soul into Christ.⁶ Each of these two stages is divided into two more sections each, which are characterized by their logical diametric opposition. For example, the two steps one must take in preparation are God's "dispensation," or the working of God in the sinner's heart, and, in direct opposition to that step, "disposition," or the working of the sinner toward God.

Hooker subdivides "dispensation" into two more sections: first, God draws the soul from sin, and then He draws the soul to Himself. Under the "disposition" heading, Hooker includes the two ways a sinner can "dispose" himself: by contrition, or a sense of deep remorse, and by humiliation.

After a sinner has passed through these four stages of preparation, he experiences "implantation" into Christ, and again, Hooker divides each stage of this ingrafting process into

⁶My summary of Hooker's preparation scheme is based on what most Hooker scholars agree is the most authoritative of the Poore Doubting Christian texts: the 1629 edition published by R. Dawlman in London (Pettit, "The Order of Salvation in Thomas Hooker's Thought" 147). I have benefitted from the summaries of this tract, which are discussed in the following: Bush, Herget, Pettit, and Shuffleton. Also useful is Habegger, "'Preparing the Soul for Christ: The Contrasting Sermon Forms of John Cotton and Thomas Hooker,'" in which Habegger supplies a helpful diagram of Hooker's steps of preparation.

smaller sections. Implantation begins with "vocation," or a calling to Christ. This calling is also two-fold: God calls the sinner to Himself, and then the sinner answers to God. After a sinner has answered to God's call, he progresses to the final stage of implantation, his "ingrafting" into Christ, which also involves two steps: the soul's union with Christ, and then the final communion of the new reborn soul with Christ.

This complicated system of regeneration was always Hooker's controlling theme in his sermons, but he never preached on more than one or two points of his prescriptive steps for conversion within one sermon (Habegger 348). The titles of his New England sermons and collections of sermons indicate that he sometimes concentrated on the smallest of his subdivisions: The Soules Humiliation, The Soules Implantation, The Soules Ingrafting into Christ, The Soules Vocation, The Soules Exaltation, The Soules Possession of Christ, and his last ambitious series of sermons, The Application of Redemption, are all individual sermons which deal with the most minute of Hooker's stages of preparation and redemption.⁷

His publications indicate that Hooker most often published sermons on the first half of his scheme, preparation. He defended his emphasis on preparation: "The soule must be broken and humbled before the Lord Jesus Christ can or will dwell

⁷The most thorough bibliography of Hooker's works is "A Bibliography of the Published Writings of Thomas Hooker," in Williams. Also useful are Bush, The Writings of Thomas Hooker; Shuffleton, Hooker; and Gallagher and Werge, Early Puritan Writers: A Reference Guide.

therein, and before faith can be wrought therein" (Implantation 1). His sermons also reveal a writer who was not just a brilliant logician, but a master of language, who used extended metaphors and finely balanced turns of phrase like no other writer of his generation in New England.⁸

One of the most popular of all of Hooker's New England sermons was The Christians Two Chiefe Lessons, Selfe-Deniall, and Selfe-Tryall, a pair of sermons which Hooker may have delivered in 1639, and which were published in 1640. The first of these, "Self-Deniall," is not thought by Hooker scholars to have been edited or approved by Hooker. However, the second, "Self-Tryall," is thought to have been edited for publication by

⁸Hooker is regarded by many Puritan scholars to be the finest writer among the first-generation preachers. Bush studies Hooker's rhetorical and stylistic characteristics in The Writings of Thomas Hooker, and concludes that Hooker was a master at constructing "metaphors suggesting extreme altitude and brilliance" (307). Miller and Johnson compare his style to Cotton's: "He was . . . perhaps the most powerful pulpit orator among the ministers of New England. His manner seems to have been less scholastic than that of Cotton, his style more popular and more ornamented with similes and figures" (291). Jones and Jones concur: "only Shepard's [sermons] approximate Hooker's in the dramatization of the soul through its soliloquies and the range and plentitude of imagery. Hooker is the most consistent and impressive of the preachers . . ." (81). Pettit states in The Heart Prepared that "few writers of the spiritual brotherhood . . . ever achieved such strength or intensity of feeling [as did Hooker]" (99).

As fine a writer as scholars think he is, and as often as they use his writing in their discussions, few have written about his aesthetics or the characteristics of his style. Aspects of his writing are mentioned in Bercovitch, Typology; Hall, The Faithful Shepherd; Miller, The New England Mind and Errand into the Wilderness; and Shuffleton, Thomas Hooker. Others who discuss aspects of Hooker's writing style are Clark, "'The Crucified Phrase,'" and Frederick, "Literary Art."

Hooker himself (Herget, "Preaching" 236-237).⁹

In his sermon on self-trial, Hooker not only demonstrates his masterful use of language, but he establishes his relationship to his audience to be that of teacher and guide. Through a number of deliberate movements, he leads his listeners, all of whom he assumes to be doubters, on the first steps of a journey through their own sinful, flawed minds in order to help them prepare themselves to accept Christ and regeneration.

Hooker uses as his opening text a passage from the New Testament where Paul is addressing the Christians who live in the "wicked" city of Corinth:

Examine your selves whether ye be in the faith: prove your owne selves, know ye not your owne selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? (II Corinthians 13:5-¹⁰).

Hooker explicates this text by reminding his listeners of the circumstances which motivated Paul to ask this question of his Corinthian listeners, and to do this, Hooker paraphrases Paul's

⁹Herget, who has done some painstaking research on the textual history of Hooker's sermons, suggests that the authorship of his sermons is most difficult to verify because he left no manuscripts, very few letters, and because so much of his work was definitely pirated. Herget also suggests that parts of his published sermons, including the first half of The Christians Two Chiefe Lessons, may have been edited by his son-in-law, the Reverend Thomas Shepard. However, this suggestion is merely Herget's speculation ("Preaching" 235-238).

¹⁰All quotations from and references to this sermon are from Thomas Hooker, The Christians Two Chiefe Lessons, Selfe-Deniall, and Selfe-Triall (London: Stephens and Meredith, 1640). I have maintained all original spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and emphases.

words into his own:

If ye have bin effectually called to the state of grace by no other meanes then by my Ministry, then notwithstanding the weaknesse of my flesh, you must needs acknowledge mee a lawful Minister of Jesus Christ. But so it is, that you have beene converted by my Ministry alone, and brought to the estate wherein ye now are, therefore ye must needs acknowledge me a lawfull Minister (201-202).

Hooker achieves three related ends by opening his sermon this way. First, he uses a Ramean construction, an "either-or" proposition, to prove that if a sinner is converted by a minister, then a minister must be a legitimate spokesman for the Lord. Second, Hooker puts the scriptural language of the text into familiar terms, especially when he refers to Paul as a "minister." Most important, he establishes himself as a minister whose authority corresponds to that of Paul in this passage, and he makes the further parallel between the biblical listeners and his own audience. He speaks for Paul, to the congregation.

Within his opening remarks, Hooker has established the relationship between himself and his audience as that of authority and reprobates, and he has grounded this relationship in biblical language. Before he moves on to begin examining and opening the text further, he paraphrases Paul once more, using much the same language as he used earlier. This time, however, he addresses the "Corinthians" in his audience directly:

The meaning of the words, if you take them together, may be thus: O ye Corinthians, since you make a question whether Jesus Christ spake in and by me, yea or not . . . take a survey of your owne estate, diligently

examine your selves, whether ye be truly and effectually come out of the state of nature into the state of grace, yea or not; by this you may come to some certainty touching the undoubted truth of my Ministry (203).

Hooker derives five doctrinal points from his opening text:

1. Conversion of souls is a testimony to the "truth and lawfulness" of the ministry who converts them (203).
2. It is possible for a man to know whether or not he is in a state of grace ((204).
3. Men, by their flawed natures, are inclined to misjudge their own spiritual states (206).
4. A man's own spiritual state "is not always discernable to him selfe" (208).
5. Every man is "bound carefully" to examine his own estate "to Godward" whether he is in a state of grace or not (211).

Although he divides all five points into the traditional three-part explication--doctrine, reasons, uses--he moves exceptionally quickly through the first four doctrines, offering only one brief reason and one use to each.

In his first doctrine, he repeats his opening message, now for the third time, by defending the authority of the ministry. He points out that "the soules of men are not converted without the speciall work of the spirit of Christ concurring with the outward ordinance" (204). He suggests that some "sectaries" might doubt the authority of a minister. A true believer, he suggests, can defend the ministry of the Word by pointing to the numbers of converts to the faith: "We for our justification referre our selves unto the whole armies of Converts, which are the glory and crowne of many godly teachers among us" (204).

Hooker explains his second doctrinal point, that a man can tell "whether he be in the state of grace, or remaine still in his naturall condition" (204). He makes reference to three passages from the Bible to back up his point--from Psalms, I John and I Peter, because "wee have recorded in Scripture several markes whereby we may grow to a settled assurance" (204). He then cautions his listeners that "this knowledge [of one's state of grace] is often intermingled with much doubting, yet in the end faith gets the victory" (205).

Hooker suggests two uses for this second doctrine by again referring to those who do not believe. First, a true believer can "confute the Popish error" of confusing one's state of grace with one's salvation. To assume that grace is equivalent to salvation is "presumption . . . a marvellous uncomfortable and desparate doctrine." The "Authors of such doubters are," he concludes, "miserable comforters" (204).

Hooker describes the passion and the desire of the faithful by comparing the spiritual "welfare of the estate" of a true believer to the earthly estate of a misguided "popish" believer:

If they [Papists] be so earnest for earthly blessings . . . how hot and eager should we be in the pursuit of getting an assurance of those spiritual good things which shall never

be taken from us! (205)

He reminds his listeners once more not to confuse their states of grace with assurance of salvation. Such thoughts are "groundlesse surmises, idle supposals, flashing imaginations" (205). His final warning on this point is a clever play on the

word "groundless": "Take heed of this presumption, which is as a broken tooth and a sliding foot" (206). To think like a Papist, he says, is to have no foothold. One will fall if he confuses his state of grace with his own salvation.

Hooker now moves on to his third doctrine, that men are "apt to be deceived" by their sinful natures "to thinke all is well" (206). He states his two reasons bluntly and precisely: "The heart of man in such things as concern his spiritual good, is not onely blinde, but also deceitfull," and "Sathan . . . laboureth nothing more then to be a lying spirit in the mouth of a mans owne heart . . . to make a man well conceited of himselfe . . ." (207). Hooker characterizes "the snare of the Divell" as a kind of siren's song that will lead men to "beleeve our own hearts," which will "tell us all is well, and sing a requiem to us, and cry peace, peace" (207). Men must not listen to Satan, but must examine themselves "by the law and testimony" of God's Word (207).

Hooker's fourth doctrine follows logically from his third. Because men are so easily deceived by their own flawed judgments and by Satan, they may not recognize their own states of grace: "We may be in the state of grace, and yet the same not so appeare to our selves" (209). He explains that God chooses to keep men in a state of confusion. God "may keepe pride and security from mens hearts, wherein they are apt to fall . . . the Lord keepe the heart in humility . . . to keepe [man] in a childe-like obedience" (209). Also, God may punish men for "bypast

negligence and carelesse respect of his mercy" in order to make men "more carefull to glorifie him" (210).

To explain how his listeners can understand this lesson, Hooker asks them to consider an example from nature:

Learne a similitude from the trees and hearbs of the field, which as they have their spring . . . so have they their winter . . . so is it with the graces of God in mans soule, they have their spring and summer seasons, they have also their winter . . . (210).

He reminds his listeners that since they do not "question the vegetative power and life that is in plants," they should not "question the truth of grace" (211). Men are not beasts, but are "heyers and coheirs of Christ Jesus," and as such, should recognize that God has granted to them, through his "equity and great reason," the ability to gauge the "seasons" of his soul: "God hath thus to exercise our troubled souls . . . in due season to us that are weary . . . " (211).

Hooker has explicated these first four doctrines in brief, logical summaries, and his explication is straightforward. First, he establishes his own authority, next he explains why men are weak and "blinde," and finally, he reassures his audience that God has indeed given them the capacity to search themselves for the "seeds of grace."

Hooker is almost always a detached voice of authority as he moves through these doctrines, only casting himself as one of the reprobates at his most crucial points: the application of his lessons. He opens his sermons with no less than three proofs that the minister's words are the power behind any sinner's

faith. He addresses his audience directly only once in the beginning (and even then rather indirectly) when he says "O, ye Corinthians." Throughout, he uses a third-person construction ("he" and "they") in his doctrines and reasons. Only when he finally applies his lessons does he use a first-person construction ("we"). This consistent shift allows him to emphasize his warnings to his listeners by including himself, the established authority, as a doubter who can take his own advice.

In addition to establishing himself as teacher to his audience, Hooker also emphasizes his role as guide to his listeners' consciences. In all of the first four doctrines, he includes warnings to them about the obstacles in their paths towards grace. They must be cautious of the false teachings of Rome, of the lure of Satan, and of their own weak judgments. He has given them reasons to hope for grace at the end of the fourth point, but he has already tempered their hope with grave caution. A man has the capacity to search himself for signs of grace, Hooker says, but the journey to grace is dangerous and damaging without humility and guidance. By the time Hooker reaches his fifth and final doctrine, he has indeed humbled the proud Corinthians who are waiting for further direction toward grace.

Hooker's fifth doctrine, that "every one is bound carefully to examine his own estate to Godward," is the heart of his message in this sermon. Although his explication and "reasons" sections are brief, his application is long and complex. It is within his six "uses" sections that he emphasizes most clearly

the steps a sinner can take to prepare himself for grace. It is also within this lengthy "uses" section that Hooker most strongly identifies his relationship to his audience as that of authoritative, experienced teacher to unaware, inexperienced pupils.¹¹

In order to begin explaining how a sinner should "examine his estate," Hooker once again reminds his listeners of a lesson that he has just given them, that they will have difficulty distinguishing their states of grace because of the "infinite windings and secret turning in the heart" (212). Therefore, because "it is become a most difficult thing for a man to know . . . we must set our selves more earnestly to worke" (213). With this introduction, Hooker now begins "to worke" on his listeners by giving them detailed instructions on how to look for grace.

Hooker the teacher now states his task directly to his listeners, and he alludes to the extraordinary attention he is about to give to this task:

The estate of glory in the life to come depends on the state of grace in this life . . . this doctrine is of excellent and most necessary use in the life of a Christian, I will therefore more largely pursue the same as desirous to give direction how to perform this duty (213).

At this point, Hooker, now speaking in the first-person singular for the first time, directs his audience's attention to his own

¹¹The emphasis that Hooker puts on his final doctrine is strikingly evident when one considers the pagination of the sermon. The first four doctrines together run from pages 201 to 211, and the fifth doctrine alone runs from 211 to 284.

organizational method. He explains that he is about to deviate from the usual three-part form in order to inject what he feels are two important issues, and he offers direction:

Because I find a spring of matter offering it selfe, I think it good to bound that which I purpose to say, within these two points:

1. In considering what be false shadows of the state of grace.
2. What be the essentiall parts of him that is in the state of grace (212).

Hooker lists three "false shadows," or three examples of men who "make goodly flourishes" and "thinke them selves of Gods favour, when they are nothing in the state of grace" (213). He names his examples as "the civile man, the formalist, and the temporary professour" (213). Hooker describes each in great detail, and then he gives his audience advice on how to avoid becoming "false shadows" themselves.

A civil man is:

such a one as is outwardly just, temperate, chaste, carefull to follow his worldly business, will not hurt so much as his neighbours dog, payes every man his owne, and lives of his owne; no drunkard, adulterer, or quareller; loves to live peaceably and quietly . . . (213).

The civil man is a hypocrite, says Hooker, because he is smug and ignorant. He has neglected "Gods word, which is the onely sufficient Schole master to this purpose" (215). This man is deceitful in several ways: he judges himself to be better than "the rabble and multitude that live in the open transgressions of Gods Lawes" (216); he considers his outward behavior to be an acceptable sign that he is in grace; he professes his superficial

faith with pride; and he flatters himself and becomes contented.

A "formalist" is a man who practices "outward duties" of his faith, who goes to hear sermons, receives the sacraments, prays often, fasts, and shows reverence towards preachers. His is "the divels policy" because he worships God in empty ways, and he is "devoted beyond measure to his natural corruption" (226).

The third false shadow is the "temporary professour," who, having been "enlightened to see the privileges that are in Christ for a time rejoyceth in them . . . yet afterward he utterly falls away" (233). Hooker compares this type of man to "the morning dew, that vanisheth away with the Sunne" (233). He explains to his audience that temporary professours "were never truly engrafted into the vine Christ Jesus . . ." (234).

Hooker offers two ways in which his listeners can benefit from knowing the characteristics of these false shadows. First, he warns every Christian listener, whether in a state of grace or not: "Let all Christians bee exhorted and perswaded, that they beware how they build upon this . . . that they doe not blesse themselves: as if greene leaves could make good trees . . ." (231). Then he advises them not to rest on "imperfect motions" (244). All men "have had some pangs of sorrow for sin, some flashing joy," but often hypocrisy, shallowness, or inconstancy cause men to fall, and they become shadows "branded with the black coal of reprobation" (244).

Hooker's descriptions of the three false shadows are lively and colorful, full of natural and sensual imagery. He never

refers directly to his audience, but his examples are so detailed and vivid that any listener could identify some characteristic of false shadows within himself. Particularly when Hooker refers to the hypocrisy within the confines of public worship, he is reminding his listeners of the very activity in which they are involved at the time. Consider the signs of false worship in yourselves right now, he is warning them, and beware of your own false signs of grace. Hooker is humbling his listeners by showing them a reflection of themselves in this section of the sermon.

Now Hooker begins to help his humbled listeners reconstruct their deteriorated images of themselves by focusing on the most detailed, tiniest steps each sinner can take in order to grow in grace and sustain his faith. He lists four graces by which a man can renew himself through self-trial: "faith, Godly sorrow, change of minde, and new obedience" (247). He explains that "for the direction of a Christian in the duty of self-tryall, [the following] specialties are to be discussed" (247). He announces that his criteria for determining one's growth in grace will be in these terms:

1. what the nature of the grace is.
2. what the least measure of the grace is.
3. what the "several markes" of the grace are (247).

For the remainder of the sermon, he gives a detailed summary of each of the four graces, in terms of these criteria.

Faith "is a work of the spirit whereby we are enabled to

apply to our selves the promises made in Christ for our reconciliation with God" (248). The least measure of faith in a Christian is "a constant earnest desire of the pardon of sin following from an humble heart (249). The marks of faith are progressive. They begin with purification of the heart, move to "strong cryes and unspeakable grones unto the throne of grace," to a "hungering and thirsting after mercy." Faith continues as a "wrestling with doubt . . . where Satan is continually laying seige," to a "serious examination of one's own soul," and finally, a sinner knows he has faith when he feels a "contentment whereby . . . he falls . . . he is as a man that having obtained his desired purpose . . . rejoyceth in things spiritual" (249-254).

Hooker now explains the second grace, "godly sorrow," which is "a worke of the spirit whereby a man is grieved and troubled . . . it is called the wounded spirit, the contrite and broken heart" (256). This sorrow causes weeping, which assures a man that "he hath offended God" (257). The mark of sorrow is a "durable and lasting nature, for sinne doth never leave us" (259). A man must always recognize that his sins, and his sorrows, will be permanent during his earthly lifetime.

The third grace Hooker calls "change of minde," which is "the image of God . . . repaired in us" (263). One can measure this change as "a setled and constant purpose flowing from a hatred of sinne, and love of righteousnesse," and the mark of this change is "regeneration, or new birth" (264). Rebirth is an

"oyle of grace," which "drencheth even the lowest and basest parts of soule and body," and allows one "to overcome the world" (265).

The final grace that Hooker describes is "new obedience," which is "an unfeined and constant endeavor to do the will of God" (271). One can tell the mark of this grace by "confidence in God" (274). An obedient servant of the Lord is constantly growing in faith: "wee hold out, not dismayed with the many discouragements that Satan and wicked men cast our way . . . we strive and get strength" (277-278).

Throughout his long, detailed catalog of the four graces, Hooker uses scriptural passages which he feels are appropriate to his points, and he also uses simple dialectic logic and similes of nature, as he did in his first four brief doctrines. He also continues to shift from "he" to "we" when he discusses the application of each point--the application of each step of grace--because he wants his audience to understand that every man, including the ministerial "voice of authority," has to go through all of these steps to prepare for grace and possible rebirth.

Hooker ends the sermon by summarizing all that he has laid out for his listeners:

. . . considering the necessity of the duty, the meanes of tryall that have been discovered, as also the discovery of the false harbours wherein Christians are apt to deceive themselves, all such as have any thoughts of their salvation, would address themselves to an exact and diligent enquiry, how the case is with them (281).

He then reminds them that self-trial is a process, that they all will look into their souls not once, but continually, for the rest of their lives:

Is it not a maine end of that time which the Lord allowes us here, that we should gaine the assurance of another life? Possesse our soules with a found faith, godly sorrow, true change, sincere obedience? . . . Let us therefore in the name of the Lord be exhorted, that in the consideration of these promises, wee doe carefully set apart some solemne times, when we may use our best endeavours to prove our selves whether we be in the faith (284).

By the end of Self-Tryall, Hooker has taken his listeners on a long, winding journey through the necessary steps toward grace, a trip that ends with an "exhortation" to his audience to continue the journey on their own, in their own time. His approach has been to act as their experienced guide, their "scout," who moves quickly when he thinks they are on steady ground, and who slows down and warns them of danger when he anticipates signs of trouble.

At a point late in his sermon, Hooker describes the sensation a true believer has when he prepares himself to receive grace: "The spirit of grace and saving faith is as a calme after a boisterous storme, an honour that follows humility" (252). This sermon is itself a barrage of opposites, of conflicting feelings, and "twists of the heart." In the very beginning of the sermon, he defines his position to be directly opposed to that of his audience. He is an expert to the unschooled, or a

guide to wanderers. He never departs from this relationship.

By making a correspondence between his listeners and the Corinthians, he justifies the journey they are about to take: they are all part of the "armies of Converts" to the faith. His composition alone reflects his message that self-trial is a painful and most dangerous preparation for grace. After he establishes his audience's identity, he begins to move away from the biblical story of Paul and the Corinthians--indeed, he never mentions his opening text a second time in the sermon--and he moves quickly toward his main objective, to impart to his listeners the steps of self-trial by self-examination.

His first four doctrines, which are only loosely based on the text from II Corinthians, represent the direction of his steps for preparation. These early doctrines deal with the "surface," or "legal" issues a sinner must consider before he begins his time of self-trial: how to distinguish the authority of a minister, how to determine the scriptural bases of one's state of grace, how one can be deceived by outward appearances, and how one can deceive himself by his own outward behavior. Once Hooker has established these four preparatory steps, he can continue to move inward, away from appearances, and toward the hearts and spiritual states of his listeners.

As he begins to open his fifth doctrine, the doctrine on the terms of self-trial, he tells his listeners: "This [doctrine] is the maine duty intended in this scripture, and so directly issuing out of it, as that hee that runneth may reade it" (211).

He has moved into the world of his present listeners when he begins to discuss the three "false shadows": the hypocrite, the "formalist," and the "temporary professour." As he describes these three types of sinners, he is speaking as pointedly to the immediate environment of his listeners as he is to the concerns of any scriptural peoples.

His portrayal of these three types of sinners also progresses from the superficial to the internal. The first, the "civil man," looks as if he is a candidate for sainthood because of his law-abiding ways. The second is the man who is not just an example of good behavior, but who attends church regularly. And the third is the man who, in addition to having all of these good outward qualities, thinks he has grace as well. Hooker allows his audience to imagine the lives of these three types from their outward, public profiles to their inward, spiritual lives, in order to show the progression of any sinner's journey toward grace.

In the second part of his last doctrine, Hooker finally leads his listeners to their ultimate destination, the actual steps toward grace. Before they reach their goal, however, he guides them through the labyrinth-like recesses of their doubting minds. In all of the four descriptions of the graces which he sets out for his listeners, he stops any forward movement in his lessons to inject warnings about the limited capacities of sinners and about the lure of the "divell." He also moves backward occasionally, to remind his audience of the steps he has

given previously.

Only during these "backward" movements does he refer to his own compositional directives to his listeners. For example, when he ends his discussion of the "false shadows" and begins to describe the four graces, he prefaces his description: "Thus farre of the discovery of the false harbours of the Christian estate. Now I come to the . . . inquiry to be made for the direction of a Christian in the duty of selfe-tryall . . . (246). Hooker moves "outside" of his own text to give distinctive "guidelines" to his listeners whenever he is repeating a point, or whenever he needs to indicate that his sermon is about to take a new direction. Only at these times does he refer to himself in the first-person, reminding his listeners that he is indeed their ministerial leader.

Hooker "moves" his audience in several different ways. He moves his discussion from the city of Corinth into the hearts of his present listeners; he moves from the outward, public appearances to the internal workings of the mind; he moves from a straightforward discussion of scriptural doctrine to a complex, sometimes wandering description of doubt; and he also begins his discussion with brief, concise definitions and gradually slows down by describing the most intricate details of the state of grace.

All of Hooker's different methods are characterized by one common pattern: he always moves from the general to the specific, from the outward to the inward, from the simple to the

intricate. This compositional pattern allows his audience to experience the lesson he is trying to explain to them. If you desire to prepare yourselves for a conversion experience, he tells them, you had better follow me wherever I lead you in this sermon. His composition is not easy for any listener to follow, but neither is the way to conversion ever smooth. Preparation is not simple, but complicated; not easy, but difficult; not pleasant, but necessarily painful.

Hooker takes very little for granted in his approach to his audience. If he has one fundamental assumption about his listeners, it is that they recognize that they are an exclusive covenanted community, and that they must all work toward salvation, no matter what their membership status in the church might be. Hooker never mentions this covenant in the sermon, yet he reminds his listeners several times that he is the minister, and that all of them have an obligation to learn from his guiding words. Whether they are already formal members of the church, unconverted but regular listeners, "outsiders," or children, they must all practice these steps of preparation in order to maintain the covenant they have established in their church in Hartford.

In another religious tract written about the same time as this sermon, Hooker outlined the ideal relationship a church ought to have as a:

union of love and concord with the faithful,
as the members of the same Body out to
maintain in their hearts and consciences . . .
. . . to think of the same thing, and speak the

same thing: to be of the same mind and Heart, as it was said of them in Primitive times (Comment on Christ, 38-39).

Although he agreed with most other New England ministers that church membership should always be reserved for those who had professed their faith, Hooker's standards for membership were less stringent than those of his fellow pastors.¹² In The Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline, Hooker had described his standards. A man could be a church member if he lived "not in the commission of any known sin, nor in the neglect of any known duty, and can give a reason of his hope towards God" (III:6).

In Self-Tryall Hooker reminds his listeners that even the most saintly of church members must constantly search themselves:

The strongest bones need sinewes, an Arme cannot lacke the least bone; the greatest Pillars have need of the lesse things: So in the Church, the strongest members in the same need of advice and support; the richest man must use the Market; so none can live without the Market of the society of Saints; and there is need of help to the best (203).

Because his standards were less strict, Hooker had among his

¹²Hooker's attitude toward church membership is somewhat controversial among scholars. Most recognize that he established very lenient standards for church membership, and that he allowed anyone in the community to attend church. Cotton Mather reports that Hooker examined prospective members only superficially, asking only "probatory Questions" (III: 66-67). Parrington labels Hooker a "democrat" because of his membership standards (Main Currents 60-63). Miller argues that Hooker, far from being democratic, was despotic, that he held complete power in his small, "more intimate and homogeneous" Hartford than did any of the other preachers in larger communities (Errand, 30-40). Shuffleton agrees, and goes on to report that, although Hooker was able to establish a peaceful, harmonious community, "within a dozen years of [Hooker's] death the church was hopelessly fragmented" (228).

listeners people who were in various stages of conversion, and he demanded that all of them attend to their own states of grace by taking his sermons to their hearts. In Self-Tryall he illustrates this demand. He assumes that all the listeners must move through the steps of preparation from the very beginning, no matter how many times they have heard his preaching, or how often they have already searched themselves. He makes no distinctions between the saved and the unsaved, or between experienced saints and inexperienced sinners, In fact, he explains some very basic teachings of his Calvinist faith in this sermon: the danger of confusing grace with sanctification, the role of the minister, the signs of the devil. To some of his listeners, these lessons would be merely reminders of religious dogma they already knew, but Hooker always approaches his listeners as if he were teaching them for the first time.

Hooker also assumes that all of his listeners, no matter what their membership status might be, are tottering between the throes of doubt and an assurance of hope. Self-Tryall is a sermon full of variety, in which Hooker describes different types of sinners, different fears, and different temptations which his listeners might encounter. He expects that each listener will have a different response to his sermon because the nature of each listener's experience is different. By deliberately fostering a sense of doubt at every important step of preparation that he discusses, and by then injecting a sense of tempered hope at each point where he has just humbled his listeners, Hooker

establishes a strong sense of caution. He recognizes that just as none of his listeners are exempt from doubt, neither are any of them likely to proceed at the same rates. Some will become convinced that they are full of grace during his sermon, and others will only begin to doubt themselves. By mixing a variety of potential fears and hopes, Hooker cautions his listeners that their paths will never be clear, that they will always have to prepare themselves with slow, deliberate care.

Hooker's ministry was always distinguished by the care he gave the individual needs of his parishioners, and by the wide scope of experiences he catalogued in his sermons. He recognized, as he points out in Self-Tryall, that there were hypocrites and "wicked men" within his congregation, and he was as attentive to them in his sermons as he was to the most saintly elders of his church. Mather relates in the Magnalia that Hooker had weekly meetings in his study with any of his parishioners who had troubled consciences: "[Hooker] had a singular ability at giving answers to cases of conscience . . . he admitted all sorts of persons . . . to reap the benefit of the extraordinary experience which himself had found of Satan's devices" (I, 346).

All of his writings on preparation indicate that he was most interested in delving into the interior workings of the human mind and into the effects that the process of conversion

had on the human spirit.¹³ In Self-Tryall, he tells his listeners that self-examination is "experimentall . . . to prove and examine our selves is a work of the spirit" (202). He involves his listeners in his "experiment" not only by constantly reminding them that self-trial is indeed a process, but by requiring them to delve into themselves at the very time that they are listening to his sermon.

Any regular attendant in Hooker's congregation would probably have expected to hear a sermon about one of the steps toward conversion, and most of his listeners were probably aware that this one sermon, Self-Tryall, was one of many lessons they would learn from Hooker on preparation. During the years 1637-1639, he preached an entire series of sermons, all interrelated, which would be published after his death as The Application of Redemption (Shuffleton 253-54). The Christians Two Chiefe Lessons, although not entirely authoritative, was most likely another series, or part of another series, designed to instruct his congregation, slowly and surely, on the process of preparation and conversion. Each sermon was another set of small

¹³Some scholars suggest that what distinguished Hooker's career and writings most was his interest in the workings of the human mind. Bush attributes to Hooker a "psychological understanding of his people's weaknesses and his humane desire and considerable ability to encourage them . . . despite his belief that their condition was undoubtedly hopeless" (Hooker 160). Pettit asserts that "no other Puritan divine . . . has so thoroughly described the interior life" as did Hooker ("Hooker's Doctrine" 518). Other works which mention Hooker's interest in the workings of the human mind are Clark, "'The Crucified Phrase';" Habegger, "Preparing the Soul for Christ;" Hall, The Faithful Shepherd; Miller, The New England Mind, and Pettit, The Heart Prepared.

steps by which Hooker both cautioned and encouraged his listeners, and each sermon was also a small movement away from the hypocrisies and shallow evils of the "stony heart," toward the "melting heart" of a converted saint. "Nay, there is no faith can be infused into the soul before the heart be prepared," he wrote in Soules Humiliation, "No preparation, no perfection. Never humbled, never exalted" (145). Hooker assumes that all the sinners who are listening to him in Self-Tryall need to be warmed, and sometimes singed, to become converted saints.

Thomas Hooker and John Cotton preached to the two largest congregations in New England. They shared other characteristics as well. They were the two most highly educated of all the New England preachers of the first generation, both having studied at Emmanuel with other eminent English Puritans. Both were strict Calvinists, who assumed that all men were sinners, and that the Almighty was both merciful and just. They enjoyed successful careers as preachers and as writers during their own lifetimes, in England and in New England. Also, both were congregationalists, who insisted that the power of any church should be vested in the ministers and converted members.

Although they shared common backgrounds and a common understanding of their theology, which they shared with most other ministers in New England, readings of Hooker's A Christians Two Chiefe Lessons and Cotton's Covenant of God's Free Grace represent two experiences which were more different in their

approaches to their audiences than they were alike.

Hooker's and Cotton's compositional strategies, and the roles they assume for themselves and their congregations, represent two distinct approaches to their own duties, and two different sets of expectations towards the capacities of their listeners.¹⁴

Rarely did Cotton deal with preparation in any of his sermons. Indeed, he put little stock into the preparatory stages of conversion, but insisted that "to works of creation there needeth no preparation" (Way of Life 422). He was most often interested in enlightening his listeners to the "legal" ramifications of the covenant with God through Christ.

In God's Free Grace, Cotton assumes that all of his listeners are interested in understanding all of the terms of the covenant, and he explains this covenant in logical, compact doctrinal sections which were traditional and easily recognizable to his listeners. He leaves them with a complete understanding of the terms of the great covenant and of their place in the community of the Bible and of New England. His composition shows

¹⁴Most scholars categorize Cotton as a "legalist," who was most interested in the terms of God's covenant through Christ with His people, and Hooker as a "preparationist," who was intent on evaluating man's role in his own preparation for the covenantal relationship. This generalization is accurate to a point, but has also led to some very inaccurate accounts of each man's contribution to the Puritan way. Miller, especially, shows a disregard for the actual language and emphases in the two preachers' sermons when he states that "Cotton and Hooker were so closely in step that they are not to be distinguished" (Errand 47).

The most thorough and helpful comparisons between the two preachers' sermon forms are in DeLamotte, "John Cotton and the Rhetoric of Grace;" Habegger, "Preparing the Soul for Christ;" and Pettit, The Heart Prepared.

him to be placing the burden of proof onto his listeners: because he has made the covenant relationship understandable, they must now labor within themselves and within their families to become part of it.

Cotton makes his case by playing a series of roles in which he proves that all sinners have a duty to accept their covenant obligations. As his sermon progresses, his roles become more and more varied as he moves from teacher to sinner, and his listeners understand that they all have the capacities to accept the gift of the covenant. Cotton's role-playing allows him to widen the scope of his sermon without ever leaving his original doctrine, and by the end he assumes that his listeners understand the variety of choices they have by which to enter the covenant.

Hooker, whose entire sermon is meant to be used as preparation for conversion to the faith, or for rebirth, establishes himself as the minister of the Word and never "leaves his pulpit" by playing roles to enlighten his listeners. He does not widen the scope of his sermon by offering various worldly experiences as Cotton does, nor does he ever refer to the variety of relationships among the community of saints. Hooker assumes that his audience knows they have a covenant, and he concentrates on the individual doubts, hopes, and fears of his listeners.

Hooker begins with a reference to the Bible only to establish his own position, and then moves his focus inward, toward the individual experiences of his listeners. Although Hooker uses all the skills of logic to prove his doctrines, he

does not take his doctrines directly from his opening biblical text. He strains the traditional sermon form in Self-Tryall from the beginning, because he bases his doctrines only loosely on his opening text. His listeners cannot predict the direction he is going to take in the sermon, and as a result, they are completely dependent on him to guide them. When he stops the movement of his sermon to indicate that he is "changing directions," which he does often in the most complicated fifth doctrine, he shows that he is aware that he is moving his listeners into the uncharted territory of their own minds and souls.¹⁵

Both Cotton and Hooker believed that only through sermons could the unregenerate be moved to find the grace of God, and they both relied on plain language and biblical similes in their sermons. As preachers of the Word, they both understood that they were to use whatever means they found appropriate to their audiences, within the bounds of scripture. To Cotton, this meant that he had to make his listeners aware of their relationships to each other and to Christ, and in God's Free Grace he does this by play-acting for his listeners. Hooker's great emphasis in his sermons was to make his listeners sensitive to their own internal

¹⁵Habegger makes the point that Hooker often "subverted the Puritan sermon form in order to reiterate his system of preparation . . . Hooker's doctrine of preparation signaled the beginning of the end of the Puritan sermon" (353-354). The Christians Two Chiefe Lessons indicates that Hooker did change the traditional form, but I would suggest that he only "stretched" it into a different shape in this sermon. This is an example of a truly Calvinistic Puritan sermon, and was simply another variation on the great Puritan sermon scheme.

states of grace, and in Self-Tryall he assumes that they know that their covenant with God will only be valuable after they have examined themselves. For Cotton, one must agree to accept the covenant of grace before one can be in a state of grace. For Hooker, one must prepare one's soul to be worthy of this covenant.

The most frightening aspect of the Puritan faith was the knowledge that all but a few humans were damned to hell, and the great question that all preachers tried to help their parishioners answer was, "How can I best live in this world, knowing that I am a sinner?" Cotton and Hooker both attempted to help their listeners to find some assurance that their lives were not in vain, that God was their protector as well as their great judge. The most significant distinction between Hooker's and Cotton's approaches toward their audiences' needs was the nature of the responses they expected their listeners to have to their lessons. In God's Free Grace, Cotton emphasizes the gift of the covenant, in order to stir his listeners to an immediate understanding of their relationships, and to encourage them to respond to each other, and to the covenant, with hope. His composition, so neatly set out and so symmetrical, reflects his position that balance in one's life could lead to grace.

Hooker has a very different response in mind in The Christians Two Chiefe Lessons. He wants his listeners to move slowly, to be cautious, to "wrestle" with their faith in order to be assured that they are vital members of God's community, no

matter what God's ultimate judgment might be. His sermon, with its winding, intricate logic and its emphasis on the unforeseeable dangers of faith, represents his attempt to help his listeners to use their own fears, and their own faith, as a starting point for a journey toward a most worthy goal: the saving grace of God. To Hooker, the "heart is like a vessell," which becomes warmed only when "the metall" of faith has been poured into it (Soules Preparation 107). The Christians Two Chiefe Lessons testifies to Hooker's attempt to start the fires within his listeners' souls.

In 1640, Hooker received a letter from his son-in-law, the Reverend Thomas Shepard, who asked for advice on Shepard's plan to move his congregation from Newtown, Massachusetts, to an area in unchartered territory further west. Hooker responded with only restrained enthusiasm to Shepard's plan. Although he enjoyed a distinguished reputation in Hartford, Hooker wrote with the tone of an introspective man who had experienced much hardship and many changes in his lifetime: "I know to begin plantations is a hard work; and I think I have seen . . . much difficulty The pillar of fire and cloud go before you, and the Father of mercies be the God of all the changes that pass over your head" (Hooker to Shepard, qtd. in Albro, The Complete Works of Thomas Shepard, I:cxliv).

Perhaps because of this guarded advice from his mentor, Shepard did not move into the wilderness. He remained in

Newtown, where he would preach his own version of Calvinist doctrine to his own congregation.

CHAPTER IV

Sweet and Secret Persuasion:

Thomas Shepard's The Saint's Jewel

In one of his New England sermons, Thomas Shepard suggested to his listeners a logical syllogism, complete with major and minor premises and a conclusion, by which they might recognize their states of grace:

The Lord has spoken peace to some men's hearts thus, he that is lost shall be found . . . and seeing this, they conclude (the Lord's Spirit helping them, for sometimes they can not do it) peace. For the major is the word, the minor experience, and the conclusion the Lord's Spirit's work quickening your spirits to it (Parable of the Ten Virgins, in Albro II, 216).

Although Shepard might have preached the Word in logical terms to his parishioners, his private journal indicates that he recognized the dangers and limits of man's reasoning capacities:

I have seen a God by reason, and never been amazed at God. I have seen God himself and have been ravished to behold him . . . it was righteous and just for the Lord to entangle and leave all men in the dark . . . hence the Lord in mercy did leave his people to great doubts, both of the Scriptures and of their own estates, that rest only upon this and the power of this to persuade their hearts (Journal, in McGiffert, ed., God's Plot 136, 165).

This contradiction in Shepard's public and private expressions toward man's reasoning capacities represents one of many contradictions with which he struggled as a preacher of the

puritan faith. He was a confident public leader who agonized about his own abilities in the privacy of his confessional journal; he was a minister of the faith who preached that his community was plagued with "dead prayers, dry sermons, sapless sacraments" (Parable 170); and he was a Puritan writer who recognized the limits of language. "There is a light of glory [by which] the elect see things in another manner. To tell you how, they cannot" (150).

The paradoxes which Shepard found in the world around him influenced the language of his sermons and his approach to his listeners. God's plan for His people was a "hidden glory," a "secret of Jesus" (172). The tensions he saw in his faith--between sin and grace, reason and passion, salvation and damnation--were at the heart of all of his writings. In his sermons, Shepard compelled his listeners to recognize the tensions and contradictions in their own lives, in order that they might hear the "sweet voice of Jesus" beyond the words he spoke to them.

Shepard was born in Northhamptonshire in 1605.¹ Orphaned at

¹The best account of Shepard's life is his own autobiography, written in 1646, which has been edited and annotated, together with his journal (1640-1646), by Michael McGiffert, in God's Plot; The Paradoxes of Puritan Piety, Being the Autobiography and Journal of Thomas Shepard. The earliest biographies of Shepard are Edward Johnson's Wonder-Working Providence of Sion's Savior in New England (1650), and Mather's Magnalia. John A. Albro includes a biographical sketch of Shepard in his introductory essay to his edition of The Works of Thomas Shepard. There are no recent full-length biographies, but biographical sketches of Shepard can be found in the following:

the age of ten, he was raised by his oldest brother, who saw to his grammar school education and sent him to Emmanuel College, Cambridge, in 1619. In Shepard's own account of his years as an undergraduate, he wrote that he not only studied the traditional program of theology and logic, but he also encountered other young "godly scholars" who influenced his spiritual life:

I . . . fell from God to loose and lewd company, to lust and pride and gaming and bowling and drinking . . . I drank so much one day that I was dead drunk . . . when I awakened I . . . went out into the fields and there spent that Sabbath lying hid in the cornfields where the Lord . . . did meet me with much sadness of heart (Autobiography 40-41).

Through meditation and by listening to the sermons of the established Puritan clergy at Emmanuel, Shepard was gradually converted. "I began to listen . . . the Lord so bored my ears as that I understood what he spoke and the secrets of my soul were laid . . . before me" (41-42). His conversion was a terrifying experience for him, however, because the nature of his doubts and fears most often led him to hold himself in utter contempt:

I felt all manner of temptations to all kind of religions, not knowing which I should choose, whether education might not make me believe what I had believed . . . now the terrors of God began to break like floods of fire into my soul . . . I had some strong temptation to run my head against walls and brain and kill myself (43).

Throughout his last four years at Emmanuel, Shepard

Delbanco, "Thomas Shepard's America;" Hall, The Antinomian Controversy; Jones and Jones, eds., Salvation in New England; and Pettit, The Heart Prepared.

experienced severe bouts of emotional and spiritual depression. His career at Cambridge was undistinguished, but he did take his B.A. in 1623, and by the time he received his M.A. in 1627, although he was fully committed to his calling as a Puritan preacher, he still felt the "senselessness of sin and bondage . . . and my heartlessness and loathing of God's ways" (41). He had considered many "temptations" through the years of his conversion, including antinomianism: "I did question whether that glorious state of perfection might not be the truth" (42).

Shepard would struggle with this state of anguish, off and on, for the rest of his life. To fight his severe depressions and fears, he established his own meditative ritual during his years at Cambridge: "The Lord dropped this meditation into me: Be not discouraged therefore because thou art so vile, but make this double use of it: 1) loathe thyself the more; 2) feel a greater need and put a greater price upon Jesus Christ" (44-45). The pattern he outlined for himself, to first hate himself, then humble himself, and finally to "receive [Christ] as Lord and Saviour and Husband," was a pattern upon which the student Shepard would rely again and again when he preached and wrote as the Reverend Shepard.²

²In "The Routinized Piety of Thomas Shepard's Diary," Tipson discusses this pattern of Shepard's private meditation and suggests that this "introspective discovery of personal inadequacy leading to reliance on God, is no accident. It represents the basic form of early Puritan meditation. With a few variations, Shepard repeats it throughout the diary" (65). I would suggest that Shepard repeats the very pattern to which Tipson refers in all of his writings, including the autobiography and the published sermons. Others who discuss Shepard's

shepard's first position was as a preacher in rural Essex, where he first befriended other Puritan divines, including Thomas Hooker. He often attended Hooker's sermons, where he "enjoyed the blessing of . . . Mr. Hooker's ministry" (46). Shepard preached in several small parishes in Essex until 1630, when he was "inhibited from preaching . . . by Dr. Laud," who charged him to "neither preach, read, marry, bury, or exercise any ministerial function" (49).

After his censure, Shepard lived in hiding in Yorkshire until 1634, when he was urged by "diverse friends in New England" to make the journey to Massachusetts. "And so, seeing I had been tossed from the south to the north of England and now could go no farther, I then began to listen to a call to New England" (55). England was no longer safe nor satisfying for Shepard: "I saw the Lord departing from England when Mr. Hooker and Mr. Cotton were gone [they had emigrated two years earlier] . . . and I did think I should feel many miseries if I stayed behind" (55).

Shepard and his congregation did not leave England when they had planned because the ship that was carrying them was destroyed during a storm just before they were to depart from Yarmouth. The two hundred passengers and crew, all of whom were already aboard ship when the storm came up, "rid it out" and "were so strangely preserved . . . This deliverance was so great that I then did think if ever the Lord did move me to shore again I

should live like one come and risen from the dead" (60).

Shepard made a successful voyage to New England the next year, and he and his company settled in Newtown, which had recently been vacated by Hooker's congregation: "myself and those that came with me found many houses empty and many persons willing to sell" (64). Although Shepard's church had originally planned to move further into the Massachusetts wilderness, they decided to stay in Newtown because "they thought their lives were short and removals to new plantations full of troubles" (64). Shepard would remain in Newtown until his death, at the age of forty-four, in 1649.

During his twelve years in Newtown, he would be one of the most active members of the clergy in New England. He took a special interest in an idea that some of his colleagues had been considering when he arrived in New England, the establishment of a college to train young men for the clergy. "The Lord put it into the heart of one Mr. Harvard . . . to give half his estate to the erecting of the school" (68). Shepard worked as a founder of the college, and he helped organize the library that John Harvard had left to the college. He also served as unofficial chaplain to the new Harvard College. In 1638, the town officials honored Shepard's efforts by renaming their town "Cambridge" (Morison, The Founding of Harvard College 194-198).

One reason the New England clergy had decided to establish their college in Shepard's Cambridge was that, unlike Cotton's Boston, Cambridge was not contaminated with antinomian heresies.

The same year that Shepard had arrived in the colony, Anne Hutchinson was becoming outspoken on the means of grace, and was beginning to accuse the clergy of teaching a covenant of works. Shepard was alarmed by Hutchinson, and became actively involved in the controversy, the dangers of which he explained:

. . . the ancient and received truth came to be darkened, God's name to be blasphemed, the churches' glory diminished, many godly grieved, many wretches hardened, deceiving and being deceived, growing worse and worse . . . as all error is fruitful, so [Hutchinson's] opinion did gender about a hundred monstrous opinions in the country . . . (Autobiography 65).

Shepard organized the synod that brought Hutchinson to trial, and he was one of her most ardent prosecutors. At her hearing, he warned that she was "of a most dayngerous Spirit and likely with her fluent Tounge and forwardnes in Expressions to seduce and draw away many, Espetially simple Weomen of her owne sex" (Hall, Antinomian 365). Shepard, who had flirted with the idea of a quick and direct revelation of God during his own conversion experience, was particularly vehement toward Hutchinson and her group.³

Shepard's experiences with Hutchinson led him to preach a series of sermons to his Cambridge congregation between 1636 and 1640, which he would later compile into his most ambitious volume

³Delbanco makes this point in "Thomas Shepard's America": "Shepard . . . had once been washed in the same light [as the Antinomians] . . . Shepard showed in 1640 that the best anti-antinomian is an ex-antinomian" (177).

of sermons, The Parable of the Ten Virgins. Within this long series, Shepard explained to his listeners the dangers of hypocrisy and the important distinctions between assurance of grace and assurance of salvation. He was proud that his own congregation had been spared from the "contagion" of the Hutchinson controversy, and these sermons attest to his efforts to "keep this poor church spotless and clear" (Autobiography 65). The Parable best represents his own approach to the Calvinist faith he preached in Cambridge.⁴

The Parable is an explication of the first thirteen verses of Matthew 25, in which Shepard's focus is the second coming of Christ.⁵ In the first half of the series, he explains the steps of preparation that the church, and individuals in the church covenant, must perform in order to meet Christ (the

⁴Several scholars suggest that The Parable of the Ten Virgins is Shepard's most outstanding and influential work. Albro states that Jonathan Edwards was "more indebted to Shepard's Sermons on the Parable of the Ten Virgins, in the preparation of his 'Treatise concerning the Religious Affections,' than to any other human production whatever" (clxxxix). Delbanco suggests that "nothing in early America reveals a greater sensitivity to the social impact of ideas [as The Parable]" (169). Others who refer to the theological value of this sermon are Battis, Saints and Sectaries; Hall, The Antinomian Controversy and The Faithful Shepherd; Jones and Jones; Miller, The New England Mind; Pettit, The Heart Prepared; and Rosenmeier, "New England's Perfection."

⁵I have supplemented my reading and summary of The Parable with the following: Delbanco; Hall, The Faithful Shepherd; Jones and Jones; and Pettit, all of whom discuss Shepard's theories of preparation and church membership. Others who also mention Shepard's contribution to the Puritan theology as preached in New England are Grabo, "Colonial American Theology: Holiness and the Lyric Impulse;" Rosenmeier, "New England's Perfection;" and Rutman, Winthrop's Boston.

"bridegroom"), and in the second half he discusses how the bridegroom comes forth "to meet the church" (Parable, in Albro, Works II, 2).

Shepard's steps of preparation are almost indistinguishable from those of his mentor, Thomas Hooker. Where Shepard distinguishes himself is in his great emphasis on God's Law, or on the scriptural constraints an unregenerate must always remember when he or she is in the slow process of conversion or rebirth to the faith. Hooker most often emphasized the implied promises of the covenant of grace, the satisfaction that a sinner felt when he "wrestled" toward grace. Shepard, in The Parable, demonstrates that he is most concerned not with the effects on a man's heart, but more with the ties between God and man through His scriptural Law. God's laws not only imply a promise, but a responsibility and a threat as well.

A bride and a bridegroom must "first see and know each other" before they become espoused, and "there must precede this act of the understanding, to see Christ, before a man can close with Christ by his will" (Parable 120). One must try to understand God's Law by listening to sermons and by relying on other "helps":

O, therefore, if ever you would have the Spirit dispensed to you, wait here upon the ministry of the gospel for it; neglect not private helps, books and meditations . . . but know, if ever you have it dispensed, here it is chiefly to be had, buy it at this shop (505).

When sinners believe they understand their own relationships

to Christ, they are hypocritical and damned. They have ignored the helps which God's law has afforded them, and by neglecting to prepare for a slow, continual conversion, they have ensured their own damnation by being unprepared:

If unready now, you will be more unready the next day . . . you will be more unfit the longer you delay . . . thy heart will be harder every day . . . Hath the Lord come to thee in the Temple, and manifested His love by His own promise . . . and wilt thou not yet own Him? Oh therefore know the worst of your own heart now . . . thou shalt see the gate shut upon thee hereafter (152,162).

In The Parable, Shepard is warning against the very dangerous and attractive antinomian faith which he had considered in his youth, and which the Hutchinsonians were espousing. Like Hooker, he gives a point-by-point description of the steps of preparation, but he also emphasizes the role of communal faith and the importance of knowledge of scriptural doctrine. Without guidance and steadfastness, any covenanted people will perish: "There is a plot afoot to make you loathe ordinances, that so God may loathe you" (176).

To recognize God's law and his covenant of grace is to be freed of bondage, to be cured of a sickness. Not to prepare for the promise and the power of God's Word is to languish in doubt: "there may be . . . some secret knot that was never yet unloosed: and hence not ready" (172). A sinner must submit to the law, and only then can he step toward the bridegroom: "therefore then the soul is prepared and ready for him, when he hath some comfortable assurance of the love of Christ towards him" (172-173). "New

England's sin" is hypocrisy and false security: "Take heed the Lord find not many of you foolish . . . that in time you grow secure . . . and you have no pinching persecutions to awaken you" (305).

A reprobate must always be aware of his own vile nature and his own ignorance, for without this knowledge, he and the entire community of saints are destined to painful earthly lives and eternal hell. When Christ the bridegroom comes to meet those who mistakenly think they are saved, the judgement will be indescribably terrible. Shepard exclaims: "O New England! New England! . . . I dare not yet tell thee what Christ Jesus has to say unto thee!" (154).

In all of his New England sermons, Shepard tried to balance his complex scheme of preparation with his emphasis on a strict compliance to God's Law. His earliest New England series, The Sound Believer, was another long explication of these same steps, and his other theological tracts, most notably Certain Select Cases Resolved, Meditations and Spiritual Experiences, and Theses Sabbaticae, all show his attempts to restrain the same emotional swings from despair to rapture, from anguish to false pride, which he had experienced during his own turbulent conversion.⁶

⁶There is no complete bibliography or history of publication for Shepard's works. Unlike the sermons of Cotton and Hooker, Shepard's New England sermons are all authorized editions, probably because his family went to great lengths to preserve his original edited texts, many of which are still part of the collection of Harvard University (Albro, clxxxii). I have compiled other helpful publication information from the

shepard always guarded against unleashed emotion--his own and his parishioners'--by reminding them that although conversion was as deeply confusing as it was enlightening, a sinner had to learn the nature of God's legal, scriptural conditions before he could prepare his heart for conversion. "Sudden work," he wrote in The Parable, "is superficial" (346).

The emphases in all of Shepard's New England sermons indicate that he was aware of the preaching styles of his two eminent colleagues, Cotton and Hooker, and that he wanted to avoid the problems which both of these ministers had encountered in their churches. Thomas Hooker had protected his congregation by moving it into the wilderness, away from contamination. He admitted the weakest of candidates into his church membership, and he preached on the most basic tenets of his faith in his efforts to see to everyone's spiritual needs within his small, closed community.

Although Shepard tended to his parishioners' individual needs with the same intensity as did Hooker, he tried to protect the integrity of his more urban Cambridge church by restricting membership to only those who could balance their steps of preparation with a thorough knowledge of God's law through scripture. He preached most often in terms of the wrath of God against hypocrites and false believers. He was determined to avoid the heresy that he had seen in Cotton's Boston church

following: Albro; Delbanco; Jones and Jones; McGiffert; Miller, The New England Mind; and Pettit.

during the years when the misguided Hutchinson was claiming to be able to recognize her own state of grace. Because he also wanted the same degree of control in his church as Hooker had in Connecticut, Shepard's membership requirements were strict, perhaps the strictest in any church in first-generation New England (Caldwell, Puritan Conversion 47; "Hall, Shepherd 176).

The sermons he preached reflect his intolerance of ignorance and complacency among the saints and the sinners to whom he preached. In all of his sermons, Shepard addressed the double nature of conversion--the comfort and the heartbreak--but he most often emphasized the heartbreak. He wrote to another minister of the faith:

Preach Humiliation; labor to possess men with a sense of wrath to come and misery; The Gospel-consolations and grace, which some would have only dished out as the dainties of the times, . . . may possibly tickle and ravish some, and do some good to them that are humbled and converted already: But if Axes and Wedges withal be not used to hew and break this rough, unhewn, bold, yet professing Age, I am confident the work and fruit of all these men's ministry will be at best but mere hypocrisy (qtd. in Hall, Shepherd 166).

The language he used in his sermons, the composition, and his approach toward his audience, all indicate that Shepard tried to guard his listeners from the struggles and weaknesses he saw so often in himself by encouraging them to face their own weaknesses and to understand God's laws by reading the Bible. He was not a master logician as Cotton and Hooker were, but he used Hooker's same preparation scheme, which lent itself to logical

precision. His prose was always clear and balanced, and he excelled at creating comparisons and extended similes, particularly when he described the wrathful nature of God.⁷ Within the traditional three-part sermon framework, Shepard could, more clearly than any other of his generation in New England, humble the proud and terrify the sinful. The "sweet secret of Jesus" would never be revealed to the slothful. Shepard's sermons indicate that "backsliding" he saw elsewhere in New England would not be allowed among his saints in Cambridge.

Shepard's last published sermon, which he had edited for publication shortly before his death, was The Saint's Jewel, Showing How to Apply the Promises; And the Soul's Invitation unto Jesus Christ. This short sermon was published originally in 1642, and Shepard may have delivered it in the early 1640s, perhaps after he had finished delivering his ambitious series The Parable of the Ten Virgins (Albro cxcii; Jones and Jones 161).

⁷As in the case of Hooker, although many scholars refer to Shepard's sermons and compare his writing and his ideas to those of his Puritan colleagues, there are no studies devoted to the aesthetics or literary qualities of Shepard's sermons. Albro evaluates Shepard's writing as "often rugged, but full of passages of sweet and quiet beauty . . . He is always serious, candid, frank, and charitable . . . [he] continually surprises and delights the reader" (clxxxiii). Grabo regards Shepard as the most eloquent of all preachers of his generation: "Shepard's reputation for eloquence and spirituality exceeded even that of John Cotton and Thomas Hooker" ("Holiness and the Lyric Impulse" 79). Jones and Jones acknowledge Shepard's mastery of rhetoric: "he moves with natural ease into rhetorical flourishes: the brief but agonizing images of hell, the soliloquies of the distressed soul . . ." (63). Others who mention aspects of Shepard's writing are Bercovitch, Typology; Bush, Thomas Hooker; Hall, The Faithful Shepherd; Miller, The New England Mind; Morgan, Visible Saints; and Rosenmeier, "New England's Perfection."

The Saint's Jewel is a concise, clear example of Shepard's stress on scriptural law and on the dangers of hypocrisy. This sermon also reflects his suspicions toward the complacent, proud, and false believers who might have been listening. More than either of the sermons by Cotton or Hooker, Shepard's sermon demonstrates that he is speaking directly to the "smug" saints of New England, whom he assumes are on the verge of apocalyptic disaster, and who are therefore destined never to be privy to the sweet, hidden glory of Christ. The Saint's Jewel is a warning to his listeners that they are not living up to their promise to God in the "rough, unhewn, bold" wilderness of New England.

Shepard uses three passages from the New Testament to open

The Saint's Jewel:

For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call (Acts 2:39).

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me (Revelations 3:20).

Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (II Corinthians 7:1).⁸

Although he begins with these three texts, Shepard indicates

⁸All quotations to and references from this sermon are from Thomas Shepard, The Saint's Jewel; Showing How to Apply the Promise, in John A. Albro, The Works of Thomas Shepard, First Pastor of the First Church, Cambridge, Massachusetts, With a Memoir of His Life and Character, Volume I (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1853).

to his listeners that he will not discuss them separately or in parts. He tells them that instead, he will draw one common theme from all three passages: "I shall handle this doctrine: That God made many promises unto his people" (287). He now explains what he will and will not discuss with regard to his opening texts: "I am come to you today not to set out unto you the excellency of wit and learning . . . but the excellency of a naked promise" (287).

The "naked promise" is the covenant of grace that God made through Christ with fallen, sinful man. Shepard begins to open the text by giving three brief reasons "why God hath thus made many promises unto his people." First, God made a promise so that mortal men "might have a fit object for their faith to lay hold upon" (288). Shepard gives an example of an indigent mother to make this point clear:

It is with faith as with a poor woman that hath a child, and hath nothing in the world to give it; she takes the child at her back and goeth from door to door, and what she getteth she giveth to the child; so faith takes the souls, and carrieth it to promise after promise, and whatever she finds there she gives it to the soul (288).

Just as God's promise gave mankind a reason to have faith, He also made this promise with His people so that they might "have a ground for comfort; for as it is the object of their faith, so is it the ground of their comfort" (288). Humans can comfort each other, Shepard says, but this is an unsatisfactory kind of comforting because "it may be that [other people] want comfort for themselves, and so are unfit to comfort us, or it may

be that they will not comfort us" (288). The only true comfort a man can find is in "Christ, to whom the soul is led by the promise, not only hath comfort, and is able . . . but he is willing also . . . and also he is immutable in his comforts" (288).

Shepard's third reason follows directly from his second. God made a promise with mankind so that those who accept Christ will be more able to help each other: "You may see the promise is not given to comfort ourselves with only, but also one another" (288).

After he has given these three short, direct reasons for God's promise to man, Shepard begins to justify the promise and to suggest how his listeners can use the faith and comfort which God's promise implies. He first asks his listeners to join him in questioning whether they have a legitimate claim to any favor from God: "Let us try ourselves whether we have any right to the promises or no" (289). To answer the question, Shepard refers to a scriptural passage from Galatians 3: "But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe" (289).

To show how valuable faith in Christ can be, Shepard gives his audience a hypothetical example in which he and they are all suffering:

If Christians be in affliction, and see that it doth them good, then it is easy to believe that promise . . . but when we can see no good come by affliction, but find ourselves more dead and dull, and also God to frown upon us, and yet we trust in God . . . this

is to live by faith, as we are commanded
(289).

He reminds his listeners that because Abraham kept faith in God through his suffering, "so must we trust God upon a naked promise," and that even when God "seems to be gone, and hell to be threatened, yet still to trust in God, and believe" (289).

Until this point, Shepard has used discourse that has been consistently straightforward in every respect, particularly in terms of his pronoun reference. Almost without exception, he uses the first-person plural "we," which allows him to include himself as someone who can profit by God's "naked promise." He summarizes all that he has explicated to this point in one startling, short declarative sentence: "But I speak now to God's people" (289).

With this one precise statement, Shepard reminds his listeners that the promise--the covenant with God through Christ--only applies to those of his listeners who are trying to be faithful. He has implied that his audience is not homogeneous, but is divided into the faithful and the faithless, and he has forced his listeners to consider to which group they belong. They must consider whether his words about the comfort of God's promise and about the comfort between people, apply to their own lives at this point. They must question themselves: Am I faithful? Am I one of "God's people?" Do I deserve God's naked promise?

To help his listeners answer their own questions, Shepard now departs from his straightforward explication and gives a long

internal dialogue between himself, as a minister of the Word, and a doubting soul who is trying to grow in faith to prepare for God's promise of grace. In the conversation Shepard creates for his listeners, he addresses the most profound, most fundamental doubts that can plague a weak sinner:

O, but saith the poor soul, I find sin prevail, and how can I then be comforted?

I answer, Look into that place of Scripture . . . you may see the oath of God, for the truth and mercy of the promise was gone forth before.

But saith the soul, The devil will be busy with me wherever I go, and how can I be cheerful?

I answer . . . Comfort thyself in this, though Satan may trouble thee for a time, yet thou shalt have him under thy feet shortly.

The soul becomes more agitated:

But alas! saith the poor soul, I am in present want of outward comfort, and how should I be comfortable in such a condition?

I answer, It may be God dealeth with thee in this as a mother with her children, who takes away the victuals from the children for a while . . . but afterward she giveth it them again.

But I shall meet with many mocks and reproaches in the world.

Let us comfort ourselves against this with God's promises . . . when we are mocked and scorned of men of the world, let us look into the Bible, and we shall find bags of promises, true treasure; and therein let us rejoice (290).

The "true treasure" of a doubting saint is his "jewel," his secret promise with the Lord, which God will hear above the

"chatter" of the multitude: "As a father loves to hear his child prattle, though other regard it not, so God loveth to hear his children pray" (291).

The soul continues to question the minister, now about the nature of death and the threat of hell:

But O, I am afraid of death, and that taketh away all my joy and comfort.

I answer, thou mayest comfort thyself against that . . . and make death itself a ground of comfort and joy to thyself . . . we should be willing to go to our Father's house, which is best of all.

But alas! I am afraid I shall fall away from God, and that continual fear thereof doth take away all my comfort.

None can pluck thee out of Christ's hand, neither sin nor devil; she were a cruel mother that would cast her child into the fire.

The minister gives the poor doubting soul one last encouraging piece of advice: "If thou can find [the faith], then comfort thyself, for thou hast right unto God's promises"(292).

By creating this conversation, Shepard has allowed his audience to be privy to a private confession between a minister and a well-meaning, but weak sinner. In his answers to the soul's questions, he most often compares a sinner's relationship to Christ to be like a child's relationship to its parent. To rely upon God's promise, he says, is to be protected by the unconditional love of a parent. Shepard is addressing the most vital dilemmas of those in his audience, who are, at the moment, in the company of their families, and who are never quite sure if

their faith in God's covenant is sufficient to ensure that they and their loved ones are protected from evil.

Shepard now returns to his earlier straightforward composition to explicate his final two applications. He devotes the rest of his sermon to the group he has only mentioned once before: the faithless. He reminds his listeners that among God's promises, He has promised hell to the non-believers: "Seeing God hath made many promises unto his people, this is terror to the wicked" (292). Shepard addresses his audience directly and gives them a hint of the dark tone he will take toward the faithless: "Here are many in this congregation to whom I have not spoken one word in the last use of comfort; now God sends other news to you" (292).

Shepard's messages of comfortable reassurance change quickly and dramatically when he begins to speak to the "wicked." He uses his earlier analogies to God's family to point out that the wicked will be excluded from God's protection. He also excludes this group by referring to them consistently as "you." If the faithful are "we," "you" are to be excluded, isolated from God's mercies.

Shepard tells this group of wicked non-believers of the dark, terrible judgment of the Almighty, and he warns them that God will compare their evil disregard for His promise with the faith of the believers: "As God's children have their names written in God's book, so you have your names written also; but it is the black book of God's wrath" (292). He emphasizes this

point: "As God's children have a mark set on their foreheads, so there is a mark set on you; but it is a woeful one" (292).

Shepard's remarks to the faithless become increasingly ominous as he looks upon the faces of his listeners: "I am persuaded the devil hath set his black mark with a brand from hell on some of you; yea, a man may gather from your very faces, almost, what some of you are" (293). He pities the damned among his listeners: "O, what a heavy thing is this, I pray you consider sadly; not to have right to God's promises, is the condition of a man that is cursed, and miserable in his life, at his death, and after his death" (293).

Shepard now appeals to a distinct group of sinners within his congregation, those who think that because their earthly, material lives are comfortable, they must be protected by God's promise:

You rich gentlemen and gentlewomen, give me leave to speak to you. I pray you consider this much: if you have not right to God's promises, the curse of God is stamped upon every cross and penny, and upon every thing you have . . . all that thou hast, in this condition, is but as if thou shouldst twist a cord together to hang thy soul in hell (293).

He adds that the wicked who are also poor will not be spared, but will be doubly distressed: "And to you of the poorer sort, that have not a right to the promise, you are in a miserable condition, for you are both miserable here and hereafter also" (293). To all of his listeners, no matter who they are or how wealthy they are, he warns that if they are living as hypocrites,

"whatsoever you do in your calling is accursed unto you; yea, your praying, reading, hearing, fasting, and mourning, all is sin" (293).

Each warning that Shepard delivers to the hypocrites and non-believers becomes increasingly violent and more graphic than the one before, as he prepares these listeners for the worst:

But, O, strange! though firebrands out of hell be spitted in your faces, yet you are not affected. But it may be some of you think to do it [accept God's promise] when you are sick, or upon your death bed . . . but now it is past; the gate of mercy is shut, never more to be opened.

O, fearful! what! hope still? Read that place, and tremble in reading of it: "The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him . . . there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 23:50).

O, consider this against the day of judgment! It is a sad day for all . . . then what will their condition be, when drops of blood and sweat shall rise up against them? (294-295).

In his final application, Shepard tells his audience that he has two final lessons for the two groups he has addressed in the sermon, the faithful and the damned: "An exhortation to the godly first, and, secondly, to the wicked" (295).

He reminds the faithful listeners that they must not be impatient or selfish as they prepare themselves for the grace of God, because they are just as capable of committing sins as the non-believers are: "Not to believe is a denying of God's power, for they will not trust God, especially in a great strait; and by this we may see what many sins even God's people may commit"

(295). To those who work to "lay hold on the promises of God," he summarizes the necessary steps of preparation as constancy, meditation, and adherence to God's laws:

Labor to live by faith in all straits and conditions, and by faith fetch a supply for all your wants, by the promise from Christ.

Mark the promises well, which is the ground for all comfort, and read them over often.

Do not flutter up and down, from one promise to another, but lie a great while on some one, and wring and squeeze it by meditation upon it.

We are all to wait patiently and humbly under our present condition; until God grant our desire, God's time is the best time (296-297).

Shepard concludes his sermon with one final piece of advice for those of his listeners who have not consented to "labor to live by faith": "I entreat you, come in to God, take his gracious offer, lay hold on the promise" (297). His final exhortation to his audience is a final warning to all, because all of God's children, faithful or not, are sinners:

God this day calleth you; it may be he will never call more. How many hath the Lord struck with death and sickness! If you stand still, you die; if you go on in sin, you die: therefore turn from all your sin, and come in and lay hold by faith on the promise, that so ye may live, and this that I have spoken unto you may not be in vain (297).

Shepard's composition in The Saint's Jewel appears to be very simple. First, he announces that he will elaborate on "God's naked promise," and then he tells his audience that he

will discuss that promise in clear, uncomplicated terms. Next, he explicates the nature of the promise by dramatizing a dialogue for his listeners, which allows them to hear the deepest fears of an anonymous soul, one that is in the throes of doubt. Finally, he gives his listeners, first the faithful and then the "wicked," an outline of what they can expect if they choose, (or do not choose), to prepare for God's grace.

The traditional and uncomplicated composition he uses in this sermon is deceptive however, because the order in which he delivers his messages belies his descriptions of the "treasure" of God's promise toward His "children." When Shepard announces his intentions toward his audience early in the sermon, he never mentions that he will address the "wicked" among them. Only after he has begun to explain the comforts of God's promises does he even hint that there are two separate groups within his audience. When he actually begins to address the wicked, he shifts tones abruptly. He surprises even the most complacent listeners, who may have considered that they are "God's children" up to this point.

Shepard consistently undercuts his lesson on God's promise with warnings of God's wrath. By surprising his audience with the grim news of God's terrible power, his sermon does not emphasize comfort, but promotes doubt and fear. He gives his listeners an invitation to "hold" to God, complete with examples of family relationships and paternal protection, and then he takes this invitation away by reminding them that they may not be

worthy or devoted enough to hold onto the Lord. He also tells his listeners that God's promise is a legitimate goal and therefore is comfortable to consider, and then he immediately reminds them all that the Lord's covenant is difficult and painful to recognize and to enter, even for the most saintly of people.

One can never be sure in which group--the faithful or the wicked--he or she belongs. Shepard tells his audience that no matter what worldly possessions they might have, and no matter what hardships they may have endured, their faith in God's promise will never guarantee happiness nor security on earth, and certainly will not guarantee salvation. Faith is only the first "hold" a poor, sinful human has toward God's favor, and genuine faith is always difficult to hold, even for the most humble, who, because of pride or complacency, may be tricked by their own sinful natures or by Satan.

As his sermon progresses, Shepard's language and his lessons become characterized by dread, darkness, sickness, and peril. By the end, any listener who is genuinely interested in strengthening his own faith, has in fact become heartsick at the thought that he may not have faith, and so he has begun to fear the wrath of the Lord. Whether he thinks that he is within God's covenant or not, he understands that God's power and judgment will far outweigh his efforts to prepare.

There is little consolation in this final lesson in The Saint's Jewel. Shepard has forced all of his listeners to

question whether or not they are worthy of the covenant, and whether or not they can even begin to understand this "jewel." By first mimicking the questions a soul must ask himself, Shepard suggests an answer for his listeners: We are not as faithful as we think we are. We are wretched, lazy sinners. The hope he gave them early in the sermon is remote by the end. Faith is possible, but will always be as elusive and transitory as sinful man's "doubting and wandering prayers" (296). God's promise is sweet to think about, Shepard says, but it will always be a secret to those who do not face their own wretchedness and unworthiness, and to those whose efforts do not result from broken, humbled hearts.

Shepard's composition in The Saint's Jewel suggests that he had some specific assumptions about the nature of his audience. His dramatic shift from his descriptions of the comforts that "we" (the faithful) can enjoy, to the damnation that "you" (the wayward) can expect, suggests he felt that many of his listeners were too comfortable, and he assumed that they were likely to damn themselves by their feelings of false assurance. The Saint's Jewel is an attempt to frighten them into active humility.

Shepard had expressed himself most pointedly on the nature of sinful hypocrisy in The Sincere Convert:

O, methinks this might pull down men's proud conceits of themselves, especially such as bear up and comfort themselves in their smooth, honest, civil life; such as through

education have been washed from all foul sins . . . here they think themselves so safe, that God can not find in his heart to have a thought of damning them (Works I,29).

Because his requirements for church membership were so strict, Shepard knew that he was preaching to a group that was made up primarily of church members. He assumed that many of his listeners were already converts to the faith, and therefore were familiar with the terms of the covenant of which he preached. In The Saint's Jewel, he isolates and addresses an unspecified group who has all the attributes of "backsliders," of sinners who feel no need to continue to prepare for grace, and he makes no mention of the membership status of these "wicked" listeners--they might be outsiders, or they might be church members. He had referred to these types of sinners privately in his journal as people who were "sincere," but who suffered from "contentedness" of the wrong sort (Journal 106).

By luring his listeners into a comfortable explication of God's promise in The Saint's Jewel, he makes their participation in his sermon easy and reassuring. By then shocking them all suddenly with several graphic displays of hell fire, he shows a strong contempt for the self-pride and self-contentment which he perceives in some of them. As he points out in his final appeal to his audience, he will not allow his listeners to "stand still."

Early in The Saint's Jewel, he tells his listeners that he will not use complicated logic or other intricate examples of "wit or learning" to open his text. Shepard had been trained to

preach in the traditional Puritan style, and his other writings indicate that he occasionally did make his points by using complicated logical constructions. Most often, as he does in this sermon, he constructed his arguments in obvious, basic sections. Shepard assumes that his listeners might misunderstand the limited power of human language. He does not want them to think that if they listen to his sermon, they will be assured of grace.

When he advises his listeners not to expect excessive complications in The Saint's Jewel, he is assuming that they might give more attention to his own words than they should, and he wants them to transcend his words in order to understand the Lord's Word. Shepard wants all of his listeners, from the "weakest" hypocrites to the most sophisticated church elders, to pay attention to his lesson and to his warning.

His final exhortation to his audience includes a plea that they read the Bible and that they meditate. Shepard assumes that part of the sinful complacency he finds in his audience is the result of their over-reliance on his contribution to their religious states. He wants them to listen, but he also wants them to realize that they have to work beyond the confines of his sermon delivery in order to enter into God's covenant.

Like all ministers of the Puritan faith, Shepard recognized the importance of the ministry to the faith. He also acknowledged the limitations of any preacher's role and the

limitations of language.⁹ To rely on rhetorical flourishes could be dangerous and misleading to a listener: "It is a rule never to fly to metaphors where there can be a plain sense given" (Ineffectual Hearing, in Works III, 364). Excessive use of figures in a sermon could be a potential sin for the minister: "Men's wits in imagining types and allegories are very sinfully luxuriant" (Theses Sabbaticae, in Works III, 173). In his private writings, Shepard used the word "unspeakable" liberally, usually indicating that words could not describe the intensity of his feelings, whether they were feelings of joy or of despair. In The Saint's Jewel, he shows his reluctance to allow his listeners to rely on his sermon exclusively for their spiritual growth.

What distinguishes this sermon most is this skepticism that Shepard exhibits toward the power of human discourse, and his implication that language is ultimately powerless in the shadow of God's ultimate power. Shepard assumes that his listeners, who live in the "God-glutted, Christ-glutted, gospel-glutted" wilderness of Massachusetts, need to be reminded that his words, however well crafted and comforting, are only the first hints to God's "hidden glory" in Christ (Sound Believer, in Works I, 250).

Nothing about The Saint's Jewel is difficult to follow or complicated, particularly for a group of people who have already consented to be church members. The simplicity with which

⁹The most useful discussion of Shepard's views on the role of a minister is Van Hof, 392-421.

shepard expresses his message makes this message all the more painful to hear. He is telling his listeners: I can teach you the words, and I can warn you of the dangers, but you will have to do the work I suggest in order to experience any growth in saving faith.

Although he was somewhat younger than his two colleagues Cotton and Hooker, Shepard shared a similar background and similar interests with both of them. When he followed them to New England, Shepard could look to their experiences and to the standards they had set in their efforts to establish "pure" church communities in the New World. He benefitted from their experiences and he attempted to avoid some of the problems they had had, by restricting church membership, and by emphasizing some of the same theological tenets which they emphasized.

The Saint's Jewel shows that he shared other characteristics with both of these preachers as well. Shepard approached his audience by using some of the same strategies that Cotton and Hooker used in their respective sermons, and he assumed some of the same characteristics of his audience as they did. However, he also had his own distinguishing strategies toward his New England congregation, which reflect his distinct views on the nature of the people to whom he spoke.

Both Cotton's God's Free Grace and Shepard's The Saint's Jewel are sermons which address the terms of God's covenant of

grace through Christ.¹⁰ As Cotton does in his sermon, Shepard emphasizes the "legal," or communal aspects of this covenant in his sermon. Also like Cotton, he most often uses analogies of family relationships to make clear the importance of accepting God's promise of faith: Shepard often compares a poor doubting soul to a child in need of guidance or comfort, or he likens a sinner to a parent who needs to seek sustenance for his or her child, the soul.

All of Shepard's comparisons, like those of Cotton, allow him to demand that his listeners use their own imaginations in order to become aware of their family relationships. By always expanding his analogies to include more and more family relationships, Shepard places his listeners within an ever-expanding family, in which they must begin to evaluate their promises to each other and to God. Cotton uses this same expansion process in God's Free Grace, when he continually explores the boundaries of family commitments. Both preachers move from the individual's covenant with God to the communal covenant, so that by the end of their sermons, they have made their listeners aware of the responsibilities which each listener has to himself, to his family, and to his community.

Also as Cotton plays different roles to illustrate his

¹⁰There are no studies which compare these two sermons by Cotton and Shepard. Those scholars who compare general aspects of Cotton's and Shepard's theological approaches or sermon styles are DeLamotte; Hall, The Faithful Shepherd; Jones and Jones; Pettit, The Heart Prepared; and Rosenmeier, "New England's Perfection."

lessons in God's Free Grace, Shepard does also. His role-playing is not so subtle as Cotton's, however. Not only does he shift his pronouns in order to associate himself with those of his listeners who are well-meaning but doubting souls, but he offers a complete drama in which he plays two parts, minister and "wandering" soul. His "drama" of the poor, frightened sinner who is trying to "lay hold" to God's promises is a genuinely well-crafted dramatic dialogue, and must have required Shepard to employ certain histrionics during his delivery. His listeners could not have mistaken his strategy at this point in his sermon. He was extending himself by playing roles which he hoped they would emulate during their own dramatic conversion experiences.

Shepard's sermon indicates that his approach toward his audience differed from Cotton's in significant ways, however. Although he does stress the legal aspects of God's covenant, Shepard's sermon ultimately does not stress the comfort and joy of God's promise. Cotton never mentions the wrathful nature of God in his sermon, and indeed, the conclusion of God's Free Grace is joyful and encouraging. The entire second half of The Saint's Jewel is a series of warnings which become increasingly more uncomfortable to imagine. In his sermon, Cotton assumes that his audience already understands the depths of despair and anxiety which accompany conversion. Shepard makes no such assumption about his listeners. He assumes they need to be shaken into humility and spiritual growth.

Cotton does not concern himself with the steps of

preparation a sinner must take for conversion, and therefore his lesson is not on the first signs of faith, but on the beneficial effects of grace on a sinner's earthly life. He never tells his audience exactly how to come into God's covenant. Instead, he gives them alternatives and forces them to use their own judgments. Shepard's entire sermon is a prescription for the first steps of preparation which a sinner must perform in order to accept God's promise. He advises his listeners to "lay hold of faith," to read the Bible, and to meditate in order to prepare for the Lord. While Cotton assumes that his listeners are all capable of understanding the terms of the covenant and can act accordingly in their lives, Shepard assumes that some of his listeners either cannot or will not take the necessary steps toward conversion, and need to be prodded toward that goal.

Shepard's sermon also demonstrates many of the same characteristics which distinguish Hooker's Christian's Two Chiefe Lessons.¹¹ Because both ministers preach on the steps of preparation, they both insist that their listeners must go through a continual and painful process in order to grow in grace. Hooker and Shepard both demand that their listeners

¹¹Shepard and Hooker are often discussed as a pair because they are both considered to be "preparationists." The best discussions of the similarities in their sermons are Caldwell, The Puritan Conversion Narrative; Hall, The Faithful Shepherd; Pettit, The Heart Prepared; and Van Hof. Miller discusses their different approaches to church membership in Errand into the Wilderness and Orthodoxy in Massachusetts. There are few studies which mention the differences in their preaching styles or in their sermons. Those scholars who devote some helpful discussions on the differences between Shepard's and Hooker's writings are Hall and Pettit.

become introspective in order to search for the first signs of faith within themselves.

Both preachers tell their listeners to look for the worst in themselves in order to find the seeds of grace. In order for their listeners to see the worst, both preachers offer examples of hypocrites and wicked sinners. Hooker and Shepard shared a deep antipathy for "civil men," those who, as Shepard described them, looked devout but were "weak" and "contented." In both The Saint's Jewel and The Christian's Two Chiefe Lessons, Shepard and Hooker describe the worst sorts of people, those who are guaranteed damnation. Hooker's approach to the hypocrites in his audience is more subtle than Shepard's because he does not point to members of his immediate congregation when he discusses the evils of superficial faith. However, both ministers offer their portraits of wicked men so that their listeners might begin to fear that they themselves are guilty of the sins of hypocrisy.

Shepard and Hooker had different expectations about the nature of their listeners, which is not only reflected by the different standards for membership in their churches, but by the compositions of their sermons. Because Hooker allowed almost anyone in his community to become a church member, he addressed the most basic tenets of his faith in this sermon, as well as in all of his other sermons. In The Christian's Two Chiefe Lessons, Hooker makes no distinctions between church members and outsiders, or between saints and sinners. He encourages all who are listening to follow his lead toward saving grace, no matter

how many times they have journeyed through humility or have felt the pangs of conversion before.

Shepard, who demanded very strenuous testimonies from potential church members on the tenets of the faith, knew that most of his listeners were well-versed in the covenant theology and steps of preparation which he prescribed from his pulpit (Caldwell, Conversion 146). Yet in The Saint's Jewel, he divides his audience into two separate groups: the well-meaning but faithless, whom he refers to as "God's people," and the weak, slothful "wicked." Shepard believed that the most saintly needed to be warned and admonished with as much (if not more) severity as the unconverted did. The composition of his sermon reflects this attitude. He tells all of his listeners that he will devote the first half of the sermon to "God's people," and then he blasts the hypocrites among his audience in the second half. He is most effective because he never indicates exactly who the wicked are. Each listener must ultimately agonize over his own spiritual state.

Shepard distinguishes himself from Cotton and Hooker most by his simplicity and directness in The Saint's Jewel. His compositional strategies and messages in this sermon are deceptively straightforward, however, and his listeners must have felt anxious and unsettled by the end of the sermon. Shepard excelled in offering the contradictions and paradoxes of the Puritan faith to his congregation. In all of his writings, he

offered the instabilities of the human spirit as the most sacred gift of God to fallen man. In his private journal, he demonstrated that he thrived on the ambiguities of his faith, that the very unsettledness of his own soul was the source of his intense passion for his calling as preacher. Part of his personal meditation practice was to "loathe" himself "the more" in order to feel the "wonderful use to me in all my course" (Autobiography 45). He used his worst doubts and fears as the source of his most intense love for God and Christ, and he accepted his great despair as the source of his greatest hopes.

Shepard's life and religious practices were paradoxical as well. Although he was one of the most powerful and successful clergymen of his generation in New England, his private journal indicates that he often doubted his own abilities to preach. He had a reputation during his lifetime for being most sensitive to his parishioners' needs, yet he rejected more membership applicants for inadequate preparation than any of his colleagues ever did (Morison, Builders 106; Caldwell, Conversion 148). He was a master craftsman of language who regarded the very words he spoke and wrote to be limited and potentially dangerous. Although he was a highly educated man who put great efforts into establishing a New England college for young clergymen, he often showed disdain for the "gospel-glutted" and "dry" sermons of his age. Finally, he was a man whose own intense private anguish led him to discourage his listeners from unbridled, unschooled emotional outbursts.

His unsettled, agonized faith allowed him to address his listeners with direct, impassioned eloquence. He preached to his parishioners with a degree of sensitivity toward their weaknesses and fears which had as its source his own sense of weakness and fear, and he persuaded them to meditate and humble themselves with the same evangelical fervor that he exercised in his private confessional writings.

"I am not able to express the infinite unknown sweetness, and mercy, and presence of God," he told his listeners in Of Ineffectual Hearing (Works III, 381). Shepard's most paradoxical talent as a Puritan preacher was that, although he might not have been able to express the "sweet" secret of God's mercy, he certainly could persuade others, most directly and most gracefully, to seek this painful, wonderful mercy.

When Shepard died in 1649, he was survived by a large family that included four sons, three of whom would be trained at Harvard College for the Puritan ministry, and who would preach to the second and third generations of New England settlers (McGiffert 7). By the time they were preaching, their father's experiences of religious persecution in England, of emigration to a wilderness, of the establishment of a new religious community, would only be recent history. Shepard's sons and their classmates at Harvard would never hear the powerful preaching of the English divines who had converted their fathers, nor would they remember the most serious crisis of their fathers' years in

New England, the Hutchinson affair.

When they preached from their established New England pulpits, these Harvard trained preachers could rely on the immediate legacy of their fathers, whose sermons during the 1630s and 1640s set the standards for all subsequent Puritan sermons. The ministers of the second and third generations would have their own crises, and they would preach sermons which reflected the needs and the problems of their communities. When they needed guidance or consolation in their calling, they turned to the writings of their predecessors. Most often they relied on the sermons of John Cotton, Thomas Hooker, and Thomas Shepard, who, always with the needs of their emigrant congregations in mind, had expressed the needs of their age in distinguished, eloquent, and dramatic discourse.

CHAPTER V

"And So I Came Hither":

The Puritan Audience in Early New England

In The Parable of the Ten Virgins, Thomas Shepard comments on the quality of the confessions and testimonies that he hears from his Puritan listeners:

There are many odd confessions by those that are received, and extravagant, enlarged discourses of the set time of their conversion, and their revelations, and ill application of Scripture, which makes such long doings, and are wearisome and uncomely (Works II, 631).

In this same passage, Shepard suggests an outline for the correct, genuine approach to faith that any believer should articulate during a testimony:

Thus was I humbled, then thus I was called, then thus have I walked, though with many weaknesses since; and such special providences of God I have seen, temptations gone through; and thus the Lord hath delivered me, blessed be his name (631).

John Cotton also outlined the elements of a complete testimony in his own characteristically crisp, logical terms:

Such as are called of God out of this world to the fellowship of Christ (1) and do willingly offer and joyne themselves, first to the Lord (2) and then to the Church (3) by confession of their sins (4) by profession of their faith (5) and by taking or laying hold of his Covenant (6) (True Constitution 4).

What distinguishes both Shepard's and Cotton's instructions to their listeners is their positive approach to the conversion

experience. Both preachers want their listeners to recount difficulties, but they also want their congregations to express the "special providences" of God and to describe the glorious experience of delivery into God's covenant of grace.

In the same way that Shepard, Cotton, and Thomas Hooker tried to guide their listeners through the dramatic, rigorous, and often painful experiences of their sermons, they also encouraged their congregations to apply the lessons of the sermons in positive ways outside of the church environment. The strategies they used in The Covenant of God's Free Grace, The Christian's Two Chiefe Lessons, and The Saint's Jewel reflect the needs which Cotton, Hooker, and Shepard saw in their colonial congregations. All three addressed immediate concerns which demanded constant attention. Their listeners needed to be encouraged to cultivate spiritual strength through family ties; these laymen also needed to be warned of the dangers of ignorance and wicked vanity; they needed to be comforted when they feared death and damnation; and they needed to learn to persevere in their continual search for God's grace.

By their own language and emphases in their sermons, these three preachers urged their listeners to become astute and fluent in the scriptural language of the Puritan faith. They believed that the ability to distinguish God's Word from other inferior forms of expression would enable their congregations to lead productive, hopeful lives in New England, even under the most challenging or dangerous of circumstances. Cotton, Hooker, and

shepard believed that the language of rigor and determination which their listeners heard in all of their sermons, including The Covenant of God's Free Grace, The Christian's Two Chiefe Lessons, and The Saint's Jewel, would set a lasting example of stability and genuine faith for the godly communities in New England. The fears and the hopes which they perceived in their audiences and which all three of them addressed in their sermons were reflected in the language of the testimonies that their listeners expressed back to them after the sermons were over.

The people who listened to Cotton, Hooker, and Shepard in New England did testify to their faith in order to become church members, sometimes publicly, and sometimes privately.¹ Because each New England church had different standards for church membership, and because there are few extant records from the earliest years of the churches of Boston and Hartford, we cannot know the exact nature of the testimonies of new members in these churches. Yet we do know that Hooker's requirements in Hartford were relatively lenient compared to either Cotton's or Shepard's, and we know that all three ministers encouraged their listeners to testify publicly in order to become part of the church covenant.

More importantly, we know that this practice of testifying

¹My discussion of the development of public testimonies is based on the following sources: Anderson, "Migrants and Motives;" Caldwell, The Puritan Conversion Narrative; Elliott, Power and the Pulpit; Morgan, Visible Saints; and Rutman, Winthrop's Boston.

was an aspect of the Puritan faith which was unparalleled in Old England, that the Puritans who moved to New England established the practice during the first decade of settlement. Neither English Puritans nor Dutch Puritans required their church members to testify before entering into a covenantal church relationship. Indeed, the Puritans who stayed in Europe were skeptical of the development. One Puritan preacher in England wrote to New England minister John Davenport in 1643:

we never finde that [congregations] were called to give account of the worke of grace wrought in their soules, or that the whole Congregation were appointed to be Judge thereof . . . [The Apostles] received men upon the profession of faith, and promise of amendment of life, without strict inquirie what sound worke of grace was wrought in the soule (John Ball, Letter of Many Ministers, qtd. in Caldwell, Conversion, 68).

Despite criticism from abroad, sometime during the 1630s, testifying for membership became a standard practice, in varying degrees, for all New England churches. One New England chronicler, William Hubbard, attributed the practice to the arrival of the eminent ministers in the early 1630s. Hubbard wrote in his General History of New England (1682), that "In the beginning of things they [settlers] only accepted of one another according to some general profession . . . until Mr. Cotton and Mr. Hooker came over . . . who did clear up the order and method of church government" (qtd. in Morgan, Visible Saints 95).

Whether or not it was indeed at the insistence of the trained clergy that all potential church members undergo some type of public or semi-public test of faith, it became the

accepted practice in New England by 1640 (Morgan 93). The puritan laymen who had been converted in Old England and who travelled to New England were certainly aware that this was a new practice in a new environment. Most of these first settlers must have consented to the practice, because most early emigrants did become church members (110).

Testifying publicly could not have been an easy task for even the most devout, however. To relate one's own conversion experience to either a minister or a group of church members was to examine one's soul publicly, and any potential convert knew that he was being judged on any number of qualities in his response. Could he articulate any special providences in his experience? Could he demonstrate sufficient humility, or was he too proud of his growing faith? Did he have sufficient knowledge of appropriate biblical texts? Were his fears and hopes legitimate?

The few extant confessions from the first generation of laymen indicate that most of the earliest emigrants to New England could articulate their spiritual states, although many were unsophisticated in their responses.² The most substantial

²Several scholars have discussed the importance of the extant testimonies of the earliest American Puritan laity. Caldwell analyzes the language of the confessions in The Puritan Conversion Narrative; Morgan gives a history of the gradual acceptance of the practice in New England in Visible Saints; and Shea discusses the significance of the confessions to the colonial idiom in Spiritual Autobiography. Two historians, Selement in "The Meeting of Elite and Popular Minds at Cambridge," and Hall, in "Toward a History of Popular Religion in Early New England," both suggest that the confessions are a legitimate and important gauge to the religious life of the New

body of extant testimonies is a group of fifty-one "confessions" given between 1637 and 1645 in Shepard's Cambridge church, each about three hundred words in length. In varying ways, these short confessions (twenty-two from women, twenty-eight from men, one unidentified), reflect the very fears, hopes, and needs which not only Shepard, but Cotton and Hooker addressed in their sermons.

All fifty-one confessions share one common characteristic: they are all divided into three distinct episodes of experience.³ Each confession begins with a description of the first stirrings of the Lord within the narrator's soul and his growing fears of God's wrath. Each confessor then describes the torments he or she has experienced when acknowledging his or her own worthlessness. Finally, all of the confessions end with personal revelations in which the narrators describe their surrender to God's will.

The most striking characteristic which all of these narrations share is that in every case the confessor equates his most crucial moment, his "turning point," with his decision to emigrate to New England. The narrators of these confessions all point to their decisions to leave England as the beginnings of their periods of humility and acceptance of God's covenant. The

England Puritan community.

³All quotations from and references to Shepard's "Confessions" are from Thomas Shepard's Confessions, edited by George Selement and Bruce C. Woolley, Collections of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, vol. 58 (Boston: The Society, 1981).

confessions sound particularly similar at these points:

And thought here the Lord might be found, and doubtful whether I had call to come because I was to leave my friends. Hence I remembered that Scripture--I'll be with thee in the first waters [Isaiah 43:2]--and I knew I should be armed like Jacob in all straits . . . So I came hither (100-01).

And so came to New England. I forgot the Lord as the Israelites did . . . And so saw sloth and sluggishness so I prayed . . . And the more I prayed the more temptations I had. So I gave up (140).

And so I came to this place and coming by sea and having a hard voyage my heart was dead and senseless . . . And thought I had some affection yet stuck nothing by me (179).

And in old England, seeing ordinances polluted, my soul desired to be there where Christ is feeding His flock in this place. But saw many stumbling blocks yet prized, yet since I came hither my heart hath been straightened (87).

Some confessions indicate that the narrator had expectations of his move to New England which had not been met, and that he was now past hope:

And so when I desired to come hither and found a discontented heart and mother dead and my heart overwhelmed . . . And in this town I could not understand anything was said, I was so blind, and heart estranged from people (183).

Hence I desired hither to come thinking one sermon might do me more good than a hundred there . . . but I found not what I came for hither and found no rest my heart was so dead (185).

Whether these Cambridge confessors were hopeful or despondent after their emigration to New England, their journeys across the Atlantic signified the first crucial steps in their

journeys toward salvation. Their testimonies indicate other characteristics of their faith as well, which reveal that these parishioners did indeed listen to the sermons they heard, and that they tailored their confessions according to the theology and the language of their pastor, Shepard.

Thirty eight (seventy-five percent) of Shepard's confessors testified that their conversion experiences had been influenced by family members.⁴ Some women learned from their husbands: "By my husband's speaking, I saw my original corruption and miserable condition and so had a hungering after means which were most searching" (Selement 37). For one confessor, the "speech of a sister" first stirred the workings of the Lord, and for another, "I went to an aunt . . . and . . . I was made by her to seek the means [of grace]" (37).

Some who testified attributed their conversions to the influence of sinners, most often those with whom the speaker had been associated in Old England. One young seaman reported:

Being sent out to sea I could not continue .
 . . and there I was laughed at because I
 would not drink and break Sabbath as they
 used to do. And the Lord in this condition I
 thought--blessed are you when men revile you
 and persecute you (37).

Most parishioners attributed their conversion experiences to

⁴I have supplemented my analysis of the "Confessions" with Selement's "The Meeting of the Minds," a statistical and rhetorical study of these testimonies. Selement's is a thorough, thoughtful, and fascinating account which has contributed significantly to my own understanding of these lay responses.

the slow preparatory steps they had learned from Shepard.⁵ One man sounded like a minister when he used the sophisticated language that Shepard and other ministers used in their sermons on preparation: "The Lord doth break off soul from sin by contrition and self by humiliation and here showed how the Lord leaves the soul to be wearied in itself and end was to bring off soul from self" (38).

Although most confessors did not use the complicated theological terminology of their preacher, over half of them referred to their own efforts toward preparation. Some mentioned the words "preparation," "humiliation," "reconciliation," and "vocation," the final unification of a sinner with Christ. One particularly insightful man testified that "after this the Lord discovered Christ and satisfaction . . . and hereby did let forth the glory of Christ into my soul and did draw out my affections out of love to Christ" (43). Others, although less articulate, tried to describe how they felt as they moved through the steps of preparation. One man explained his own steadfastness in a simple eloquence that sounded like a confession from Shepard's own spiritual journal: "Then seeing keeping His commands was an evidence, then I remembered though I was vile yet I did love Sabbaths and saints" (46).

Few of the testimonies contained references to Shepard himself, although several confessors included references to

⁵Shepard structured his sermons on preparation according to the model of Hooker's preparatory scheme. For a discussion of these steps of preparation, see Chapter III, 81-83, of this study.

lessons from Shepard's sermons, most often The Parable of the Ten virgins and The Sound Believer (45;47). One woman testified that she suffered humiliation when "every sermon made [me] worse and [I] sat like a block under all means" (47). Many confessors could recount specific lessons from Shepard's sermons, and all referred to scripture liberally in their testimonies (47-48).

Shepard's "Confessions" are most valuable in our analysis of the relationship between a Puritan preacher and his listeners because these confessions indicate that some who heard his sermons regularly were able to articulate their individual responses to their faith by mimicking the scriptural language and by emphasizing the same important aspects of their faith that they heard from the pulpit. When they made public confessions, these laymen were most inclined to refer to their voyages to New England with their families, to their godly community, and to the workings of the Lord on their own spirits. However rudimentary, they expressed their feelings in the same paradoxical terms of longing and of "sweetness" that Shepard used in The Saint's Jewel and in his other sermons. Much like the minister who preached to them, they often indicated in their testimonies that words could not express their deepest emotions.⁶

⁶In her study of the "Confessions," Caldwell makes the point that this characteristic silence among New England Puritans was a "problem" which "seems in the larger sense to have muted the very expressiveness and confidence of the voices of [God's] people" (138). I would suggest that the somewhat reluctant expression among the testifying laymen in the "Confessions" points more to their understanding of Shepard's skepticism toward language than it does to their inability or lack of confidence. These speakers are mimicking their pastor in many ways in their

These responses are of limited value, of course, because they represent only a small portion of Shepard's actual congregation in Cambridge, and because they represent only the most ardent converts, those who were willing or felt ready to become full church members. However restrictive this testimonial evidence might be, it does help us to isolate some of the emphases and the expectations which a Puritan pastor and his listeners shared in the early years of New England settlement. The minister and his pastorate were all concerned about the unsettled circumstances in their newly transplanted communities; they were worried about the welfare of their families; and they were most deeply concerned with the state of their individual spiritual relationships to God.

One of the most poignant confessions among Shepard's congregation is that of a man whose child died during the voyage to New England. Although he did not say so directly, he implied that his decision to look for "new plantations" in New England was the "sin" for which he and his family were punished:

And yet God's hand hath been much against me since I came hither and I know not but it hath been for my carelessness in not watching over my child in regard of the sin of the family . . . But for that sin which broke out it had been good for me if I had never come hither to this place. The Lord's hand hath been much out against me and is so still (195).

This confessor concluded his narrative by admitting that, as part

testimonies, and one of the most obvious ways seems to be their acknowledgement that some of God's workings are "unspeakable."

of his painful conversion, he had come to realize that he had to surrender his will to God constantly. His story had an inconclusive, sad ending when he said, "I have gone on so formally and coldly since I came here. Though I have enjoyed much in public yet I have been very unfruitful and unchristianlike" (195).

This man's story is typical of others of these narratives, many of which are episodic accounts of the problems, heartaches, and disappointments which Shepard's parishioners suffered after they moved to New England. These laymen were accustomed to listening to episodic accounts of other peoples' tribulations every time they heard a sermon or read the Bible. They had been encouraged by sermons, including The Saint's Jewel, to enter into a family relationship with the Lord, and to become part of God's great family in scripture. These confessors perceived that as newly arrived colonists, they were at the mercy of forces outside of their control, and the unfinished endings of their narrations reveal that they recognized that they were being tested, not just for membership into the church, but for membership into God's community of the faithful.

If they were truly God's people, there would be no "happy endings." They considered their conversion experiences, which they intertwined so closely with their migration experiences, to be the signs that they might be God's chosen people. They also understood the nature of their Calvinist faith well enough to recognize, however sadly, that they would never really know if

they were a chosen people, nor would they ever be able to express themselves fully on their own fates. To endure with steadfast faith and humility in the face of unknown dangers in New England was, by their own admission in their confessions, the proof that they were indeed worthy of entering a covenant of grace with God in the Cambridge church.⁷

Although Cotton's and Hooker's confessional practices in their churches were different from Shepard's, they were different only by degrees. There are no extant recorded testimonies from Boston or Hartford, but it would be difficult to argue that Cotton and Hooker did not share the same kinds of similar characteristics with their respective congregations as Shepard did with his. As we have seen in The Covenant of God's Free Grace, The Christian's Two Chiefe Lessons, and The Saint's Jewel, all three pastors emphasized many of the same concerns which Shepard's lay congregation mentioned, including the emphasis on family ties--both biblical and worldly--and on the constant need for self-evaluation and spiritual struggle.

All three pastors supply their listeners with ample dramatic episodes in their sermons. Cotton and Shepard both play-act

⁷Caldwell points out that, in contrast to Shepard's "Confessions," those testimonies from England during the late seventeenth century were not characterized by faltering expression, and did have "happy endings": "The texture of the English narrative as a whole simply does not convey the sense of language being weighed and found wanting that comes through in New England's church relations. There is always that assurance, that finished quality [in the English narratives]" (139).

their ways through the same struggles of soul which Shepard's confessors amplify by their own testimonies. Hooker gives detailed examples of the most hypocritical, worst sorts of sinners in order to help his listeners avoid becoming, or associating with, hypocrites. All three base their sermons on Bible stories which emphasize the dramatic, difficult struggles of other people or groups of people who are in the midst of their own struggles to find God, most notably the stories of Abraham, David, Paul, and Christ.

In all three sermons, the ministers demand that their listeners journey in order to understand the ways of the Lord, thus emphasizing that God's covenant with His people is a quest. Yet none of the sermons indicate that the quest is over or that the end of the quest is in sight. Indeed, all three sermons end with the same message: All we can do is to move constantly toward God's grace. The open-ended narrations of Shepard's confessors reveal that these people knew that their stories were not over. In their faltering, sometimes downhearted language, they expressed their own wanderings, their own journeys, and their own uncertainties. Certainly Cotton's and Hooker's listeners, people who heard these same unfinished stories twice a week from other pulpits in New England, were aware that they, too, were journeying--sometimes stumbling--through the unpredictable experiences of spiritual growth, and through the equally unpredictable experience of migration. They knew that they were all moving on untried ground, toward ends which they

could not predict.

No other English-speaking people who migrated to the North American continent in the seventeenth century resembled their non-emigrating counterparts in England quite so much as the puritans, and no other English emigrants colonized in quite the same way as the Puritans did. Most Puritans who migrated to Massachusetts in the 1630s were natives of the most populous parts of England, the south and east, and most came from middle-class backgrounds (Anderson 357). By the time they decided to move to New England, many were in their twenties, and already had established trades, businesses, or farms in England (347). Some had attended grammar schools, and perhaps as many as sixty percent of the lay emigrants could read (Lockridge, Literacy, 517-22).

The first emigrants travelled in groups, often, as we have seen in the cases of Cotton, Hooker, and Shepard, as church-related groups who had worshipped together in Old England and who planned to establish covenanted communities in New England. Records from the ships that carried these first groups to Massachusetts indicate that all age groups were represented in the migration.⁸ Almost half of those aboard ship were between

⁸I have used several sources for my statistical and historical information on colonization. Most helpful has been Anderson, who studies the passenger lists of 106 of the earliest ships to New England in "Migrants and Motives," and includes in her study several charts on population statistics and other demographic data. Also useful are Cressey, "The Vast and Furious Ocean;" Demos, A Little Commonwealth; Foster, "New

the ages of twenty-five and fifty-nine, and almost thirty percent of the emigrant population was under fifteen years old. Fifty-seven percent of the travellers were men, and forty-three percent were women (Anderson 347-48).

Unlike any other peoples who settled in North America, the puritans emigrated as family units. During the first seven years of migration, almost 80 percent of the emigrants travelled as part of "simple family households" which consisted of an average of four family members (350). Almost all of the single passengers aboard the New England-bound vessels were males (353). When they arrived in New England, these covenanted groups of families usually built their new communities to reflect their commitment to their church covenant.

For example, the appointed magistrates of the village of Dedham, Massachusetts, which was established in 1636, expressed their desire to live together under a town covenant by listing fundamental rules for their townsmen. Their town charter reflects their desire to be a closed community. They were selective about those whom they allowed to live in Dedham: "We shall by all means labor to keep off from us all such as are contrary minded." Each new covenanted member of the community was under obligation to "subscribe hereunto his name, thereby obliging both himself and his successors after him for ever, as

England and the Challenge of Heresy," and Their Solitary Way; Lockridge, Literacy in Colonial New England, and A New England Town; Morgan, The Puritan Family, and Visible Saints; Notestein, The English People on the Eve of Colonization; and Rutman, Winthrop's Boston.

we have done" (Lockridge, A New England Town 7).

Most of the early New England towns were laid out in similar ways: houses and the meetinghouse were built in a circle around a "common," a centrally located pasture for livestock. Most settlers shared the lands they farmed. Often each family was allotted a certain acreage on which to plant, but they all worked together during these earliest years. If a man were to buy his own private acreage, this land was usually located outside of the town proper. In the 1630s, those farmers who could afford to buy land were few, but if they had resources from their years in England, they might own property, which was usually located adjacent to the town (3-22).

The colonists who lived and worked in these closed, carefully guarded communities in New England listened to sermons at least twice a week, and attended Bible study groups at least once a week, where they often reviewed the notes they had taken from the most recent sermons. When they heard their ministers preach about God's covenant to his family, as Cotton preached in The Covenant of God's Free Grace, or about their duties to maintain community purity, as Hooker preached in The Christians' Two Chiefe Lessons, these people could look around them and see the living proof of their efforts to keep their promises to God. They had already begun to work toward their covenant by removing themselves and their families from the evils in England, and they had established pure communities, where they could watch over each other, in New England. No matter how uncertain each of them

might have been about the state of his or her own soul, no matter how difficult it might have been for each to articulate his faith, every time these laymen assembled together to hear God's word, they could be encouraged that, as a group, they were moving toward grace in the right direction.

The extant "Confessions" and other historical documentation on this first generation of New England settlers parallel many of the emphases of the Puritan faith which we have seen in the texts of the three sermon experiences represented in this study. When Cotton says to his congregation "you must labour to bring yourselves into a good family," he is urging his listeners to work toward a stronger communal effort (God's Free Grace 19). When Hooker asks "Is it not a maine end of that time which the Lord allowes us here, that we should gaine the assurance of another life?" he is encouraging his Hartford congregation to look beyond the difficulties of their lives toward Heaven (Self-Tryall 284). Shepard, by reminding his listeners that although they may feel "dead and dull," as if God were "frowning upon" them, adds immediately that "yet we trust in God [and] live by faith" (Saint's Jewel in Works II, 289).

What most distinguishes all three in their sermons is their ability to encourage their listeners, people who are never quite sure if their journey to New England has been God's will, to keep journeying. By their dramatic dialogues and their continual shifts from external to internal, from worldly to heavenly, from

old Testament to New World, all three preachers craft the language of their faith in the same ways as they hope their listeners will craft their new lives. Their sermons reflect the same control and balance that their New England listeners have tried to find in their well-planned villages, their everyday family lives, and their civil responsibilities.

The preachers are constantly reminding their listeners, sometimes subtly and other times openly, that a Christian's life will always be one of hardship and wandering. The passage to New England is but another challenge to God's people. The Covenant of God's Free Grace, The Christians' Two Chiefe Lessons, and The Saint's Jewel attest to the clergy's efforts to ensure that their congregations understand the significance of their own actions, and that they never give up hope. "Labor to live by faith in all straits and conditions," Shepard tells his listeners in The Saint's Jewel (296). He is talking to a group of people who are laborers, and who do understand that the condition of their lives in this world depends on the quality and depth of their relationships to God and to each other.

The Puritan faith which Cotton, Hooker, and Shepard had studied at Emmanuel College served them well when they removed to New England. Their simple discourse allowed them all to address issues of their grim Calvinist faith in ways which were most appropriate to a group of rather typical English Puritan families who had consented to try to govern themselves away from the established institutions of England. These people were no longer

typical Englishmen, however. They were living in extraordinary circumstance because they were attempting to live solely under God's law for the first time in their lives. All were facing an unknown, uncertain future. The comfort of a language with which they were already familiar, preached time and time again from pulpits in their new harsh environment, was one of the few comfortable rituals they had in the New World.

As grim as the doctrine they preached was, Cotton, Hooker and Shepard all presented this doctrine in terms of an ongoing story. They and their listeners knew their story was frightening, but they also recognized that theirs was an unfinished drama in which all listening--men, women and children--had roles. During the first generation of settlement, not even the most worldly, astute ministers dared to suggest the end of the story of God's people.⁹

Never again would sermons from New England pulpits be so encouraging toward those listening. In God's Free Grace, The Christians' Two Chiefe Lessons, and The Saint's Jewel, the ministers barely implied that New England was a New Jerusalem,

⁹My own reading of the sermons of Cotton, Hooker, and Shepard has led to my analysis of their sermons in terms of unfinished "dramatic journeys." However, I have supplemented my understanding of the "journey" aspect of these sermons with the following useful discussions of Puritan rhetoric and history, all of which suggest some quality of the "unfinished" journey in first-generation sermons: Bercovitch, The Puritan Origins of the American Self and "Horologicals to Chronometricals;" Caldwell, The Puritan Conversion Narrative; Davidson, "'God's Well-Trodden Foot-Paths;" Elliott, Power and the Pulpit; Foster, "New England and the Challenge of Heresy;" Jones, "Biblical Rhetoric," and "Puritan's Progress;" and Pettit, The Heart Prepared.

that the efforts of the godly community in New England might be rewarded in heaven. The preachers were most concerned with assuring their listeners that they were, literally, on the right track. Cotton, Hooker, and Shepard worked to make their listeners aware that their earthly lives in New England were indeed valuable, individually and collectively, and that strong faith could sustain them in their efforts to move toward God in this world.

Both their sermons and the testimonies of their listeners reflect the problems which faced a people who were journeying. Some of the travellers would falter or wander, and some would desert the effort, as in the cases of Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson, the two most famous "deserters" of the first generation. But the texts of their sermons indicate that they felt that most of God's people would persevere, equally out of faith and out of fear, on their journeys toward grace.

This first generation of Puritan divines did not frighten their listeners by preaching apocalyptic messages. They did not presume to judge the fates of their listeners. Shepard, who came the closest to verbalizing a judgment on his congregation in The Saint's Jewel, was careful to distinguish between the faithful, whom he did not judge, and the faithless, to whom he devoted the entire end of his sermon. All three preachers, by their very silence on God's final judgment of sinful man, assumed that their listeners already understood the Calvinist doctrine behind their silence: they would all be judged according to laws which no man

would ever know in this world. Their sermons demonstrate that they knew that ultimately, God's judgment of them all was "unspeakable," that they could never preach or know the ending of their own drama.

The children of the first generation, however, having grown up listening to sermons in which the preachers stressed the incomplete, unfinished business in New England, began to judge themselves and their communities in terms of this unfinished drama. As they grew into adults in the 1650s and 1660s, they transformed, however unconsciously, the rebellious and passionate nature of their fathers' English Calvinism into the established dogma of their New England churches. The strategies which the second-generation preachers used in sermons to their New England born congregations began to differ dramatically from those of their fathers because the nature of the problems they and their listeners perceived in their communities was different.

The first generation of Puritan preachers in New England taught their youngest listeners perhaps too effectively. The second and third generations of Puritan preachers, all Harvard trained, understood the "two-edged sword" of their Calvinist God, but, unlike their fathers, the new preachers most often emphasized the wrathful, judgmental nature of their God. If the first generation emphasized the "unspeakable" mercy of God and the continuing drama of a Christian people, the second and third generations stressed the "speakable" judgment of a wrathful God

toward an unregenerate, overly confident people.

These young ministers had been taught to be introspective and unsettled in their own faith, and their efforts in the pulpit reflected this anguished introspection. By the time they were preaching, they were most inclined to respond to their own callings, and to the needs of their congregations, with contempt for their own and their listeners' spiritual states. Their sermons show that they were increasingly confident of that unspoken judgment which their fathers had rarely mentioned: God had judged New England to be a community of hopelessly lost sinners.

Two classic examples of the sermons of the second generation are The Mystery of Israel's Salvation, by Increase Mather, and Eye-Salve, by Thomas Shepard, Jr. Mather was the son of Richard Mather, a contemporary of Cotton, Hooker, and Shepard, who had emigrated with them and had preached in New England until his death in 1669. The younger Mather, born in 1639 in New England, graduated from Harvard College and preached in Boston until his death in 1723.¹⁰ The Mystery of Israel's Salvation, which he published in 1667, includes a warning about the future that is not to be found in the sermons of Mather's predecessors in the New England pulpits:

There shall such a day . . . wherein the nations shall learn war no more, but before this day there must be terrible doings and

¹⁰The most thorough biography and discussion of the Mathers in New England is Middlekauff, The Mathers: Three Generations of Puritan Intellectuals, 1596-1728.

desolations made upon the earth . . . I may tell you therefore, that dreadful wars, confused noise, and garments rolled in blood, are a sign of Christ's appearing to establish his kingdom on the earth The great and terrible day of the Lord, it is near, it is near, wherein the mighty man shall cry bitterly (qtd. in Heimert and Delbanco 243).

As Mather does in his sermon, Thomas Shepard, Jr., another Harvard trained minister who preached in his father's pulpit in Cambridge until 1677, concentrates his efforts in Eye-Salve on the prevailing sins of his community, and on the judgment to which they can look forward. He uses as his opening text a passage from Jeremiah:

O generation, see ye the word of the Lord: Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? A land of darkness? wherefore say my people, we are lords, we will come no more unto thee (Jeremiah 2:31; 250).

In the course of this sermon, Shepard reminds his congregation of the differences between the biblical wilderness in the book of Jeremiah and the "wilderness" in New England, which "hath not been a wilderness to us, or a land of darkness, but [the Lord] hath granted us light and salvation" (251). Shepard admonishes his listeners for neglecting the blessings they have in New England:

There hath been the light of the gospel, the light of the ministry of the word; the light of his countenance hath been shining upon his people; respecting leaders . . . have been guides The college hath been a means under God to continue the lamps lighted among

us . . . (251).

He compares the sinners of New England to the Israelites:

Their church covenant grew to be in many but a form . . . they grew a worldly people, and so neglect of communion with God in secret grew upon them. Hypocrisy, divisors, carnal mixtures, despising God's Sabbaths . . . pride and idleness . . . [was] found in New England (257).

Finally, he asks a series of disturbing questions about the state of the families he sees in New England:

Why [are] family-duties in many houses laid aside--that in multitudes of families there is no prayer from the one end of the week to the other? No family catechizing, no repetition of the word preached, nor calling children and servants to an account of what they do or should hear? No reading of the scripture? Maybe no Bible, or only a torn Bible to be found . . . (259).

Although this sermon is intended to teach a lesson about family relationships to a congregation made up of family members, just as Cotton's Covenant of God's Free Grace was, Shepard's approach to his audience in Eye-Salve is quite different from the approach that Cotton took toward his audience. Cotton's sense of reassurance, and his steady efforts to guide his audience toward productive labor and faith, are not qualities of these later sermons. The biblical language of enduring hope and vitality, so apparent in The Covenant of God's Free Grace, The Christian's Two Chiefe Lessons, and The Saint's Jewel, has been replaced by a language characterized by an overwhelming sense of chastisement and ultimate disaster.

Shepard and Mather crafted their sermons in the traditional Puritan form, but their emphases on slothfulness and idleness, and their constant reminders of the violent apocalypse of the

future, gave their language a distinctive and pervasive tone of doom.¹¹ This second generation had learned to preach the tenets of their Calvinist faith and to "pierce the minds" of their listeners only too well. Just as Cotton, Hooker, and Shepard had perceived that patience, balance, and compromise were essential needs of their audiences, their New England-born sons had also learned to gauge the needs of their audiences from their own experiences. The ministers who preached in New England in the 1660s were never so sure of their spiritual journey as their fathers had been in their sermons, and the "jeremiad" sermons of the younger generations were responses to their fears about the audiences to whom they preached.

By the time Cotton's grandson, Cotton Mather, (son of Increase Mather and Maria Cotton Mather), received his M.A. from Harvard College in 1681, the population of New England was close to 100,000, and was doubling almost every twenty years (Hofstadter 5; Rutman, Puritanism 49). Among the newest emigrants to this prosperous seaport town were English Quakers, Germans, Swedes and Dutch, some of whom had no affiliation with the established churches of their new communities. John Cotton had been preacher to the only church in Boston during his lifetime,

¹¹The most helpful discussions of the second and third generation sermons of New England are Bercovitch, "Horologicals to Chronometricals," and The Puritan Origins of the American Self, both of which are invaluable discussions of the features of the American "jeremiad" sermons. Also useful to my discussion are Bremer, The Puritan Experiment; Brumm, American Thought and Religious Typology; Rutman, American Puritanism; and Ziff, Puritanism in America.

but by 1660, there were three churches in Boston, and over thirty new congregational churches outside of Boston in rural Massachusetts (Rutman 49).

The ministers of these later years never enjoyed the power over their communities that Cotton, Hooker, and Shepard had during the early years of settlement in New England. During the early years, all of the New England colonies had been self governing, in part because their English counterparts were waging a civil war, and struggling through years of experimental government. When Charles II was restored to the English throne in 1660, he began to take great interest in the economically productive New England colonies, and the lay government in New England become increasingly subject to English mandates.¹²

The Puritan authority over community issues became more and more limited after the Revolution. The New England Puritan clergy, including Increase and Cotton Mather, and Thomas Shepard, Jr., were spokesmen for the largest, but not the only, religious communities in New England. When they looked out at their congregations from their pulpits, they saw people who, as devout as they might have been, were no longer living in small, enclosed villages where "outsiders" were not welcome. The godly

¹²There are many good works which include discussions of the effects of the English Revolution on the New England colonies. For this study, I have relied on the following: Ahlstrom, Theology in America; Boorstin, The Americans; Bridenbaugh, Cities in the Wilderness, and Vexed and Troubled Englishmen; Hall, The Glorious Revolution in America; Haller, The Rise of Puritanism; Hill, God's Englishman; and Walzer, Revolution of the Saints.

communities of their fathers were becoming the growing, more secular towns under direct governmental control of the English government.

The sermons of the American born Puritan clergy were responses to the changes in population, to the shifts in power, and to efforts among the clergy themselves to maintain their congregational independence. Their fathers, who had struggled through many crises in their communities, had never had to answer to anyone other than the other clergy during the early years, and had been able to maintain their individual integrity. Close readings of The Covenant of God's Free Grace, The Christians' Two Chiefe Lessons, and The Saint's Jewel show that Cotton, Hooker, and Shepard did not agree on the emphases of their religion, nor on every doctrinal point of their faith, nor on every church practice. But they had never been forced to agree. Cotton could urge his congregation to watch over each other as many times as he chose. Hooker could preach on the minute stages of preparation, and he could remove his congregation to Hartford because he and his congregation were completely independent from any laws other than the scriptural laws by which they governed themselves.

The second and third generations never had this ecclesiastical freedom. They were bound by renewed English law, by colonial local laws, and by a series of controversial church

laws, among them the "Half-Way Covenant."¹³ By the 1660s, the Puritan ministers, devoid of much of their power, could not agree with each other on how to manage their churches. The changing New England society of the late seventeenth century would not allow for the dogmatic, controlled communities of God which their fathers had established, and the sermons of these ministers reflect the growing fear, confusion, and bitter disappointment of preachers who felt betrayed by their communities, and perhaps by their God.

These later Puritans felt betrayed precisely because their fathers had succeeded too well in their efforts to establish closed, godly communities in the New World, and because the preachers of the first generation had, by design, left the drama of their wandering godly people unfinished. Most of the people who listened to Cotton, Hooker, and Shepard shared with their ministers the experiences of religious persecution and emigration. Whether they were highly educated ministers of the faith, or illiterate farmers, these emigrant Puritans had a view of the world which included the dangers of migration and transplantation, and the comforts of communal promises and pastoral guidance. The nature of their Calvinist religion demanded that they constantly try to live according to scriptural law, and that they never attempt to predict their own fates.

¹³The "Half-Way Covenant" is discussed in Chapter II, 66, of this study. Other discussions are in Morgan, Puritan Family and Visible Saints.

Week after week their preachers recreated their spiritual journeys and reminded their congregations of their responsibilities toward themselves and toward God, always with the implicit understanding that whatever happened in this world would be according to God's will. In God's Free Grace, The Christian's Two Chiefe Lessons, and The Saint's Jewel, Cotton, Hooker, and Shepard all preached that God had made a promise to His people which was theirs if they chose to work for it. To read these three sermons from beginning to end has allowed us to recognize that these ministers expected their listeners to use their own capacities to find God, that ultimately, each listener would have to use the sermon experience as a starting point for his or her own journey toward Christ.

Cotton, Hooker and Shepard never declared in their sermons how, or if, their listeners would be rewarded for their efforts. They did not define their congregations as a people already judged, but as people who were still moving, some more slowly than others. The journeys, the deliberate dramatic narratives which these three crafted, attest to their efforts to keep their listeners actively sensitive to their own paces and to their own capacities. To experience a sermon was to progress on the slow, introspective journey toward saving grace.

The experiences of Cotton, Hooker, Shepard, and their congregations would never again be duplicated in quite the same way by any group who settled on American soil. Neither would the language of English Calvinism be expressed with quite the same

passion as during the years when Cotton, Hooker and Shepard were preaching and writing. Colonial American religion would splinter into many different sects, and would become characterized by a plurality of theological interests. Although the Calvinism and the self-conscious introspection of the early Puritans would emerge from time to time, most notably in the language and teachings of Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), no American pulpit literature would ever be so closely related to the passionate writings of the reformed theology of John Calvin, or to the controlled rhetoric of the early English Puritan divines.¹⁴

Cotton, Hooker, and Shepard challenged their listeners to action every time they preached by relying on their Old World skills and their New World experiences. By adapting their mastery of human language to the biblical language of their God, and by creating dramas in which their listeners could participate as active members of God's community, now in New England, they challenged the minds of their audiences to capacity with every unfinished drama they presented.

Their listeners knew that to hear a sermon was to hear not

¹⁴Edwards had much in common with Thomas Shepard, whom he regarded as the most authoritative of the early Puritan preachers. In his biography of Shepard, Albro states that Edwards "was more indebted to Shepard's Sermons on the Parable of the Ten Virgins, in the preparation of his "Treatise concerning the Religious Affections," than to any other human production whatever" (clxxxix). Edwards' Personal Narrative also has much in common with Shepard's spiritual autobiography. Although there is no thorough scholarship on these two spiritual autobiographies, studies on the similarities of the works of Shepard and Edwards could only be valuable contributions to our understanding of early American theology and literature.

just words, but was to experience the Word. They knew that without the strength of the Word through the sermons, they would wander aimlessly into an abyss of unknown terror and wilderness. When Shepard told his audience in The Saint's Jewel, "If you stand still, you die," he was acknowledging the dramatic risk of the Christian journey. When his listeners responded with the words "since I came hither," they were also recognizing that their journey was yet incomplete. Every time Cotton, Hooker, or Shepard took their listeners with them on a passage toward grace, they used their human language to teach their audiences that theirs would be an unknowable, ultimately indefinable end. They were all still searching for the faith, the grace, the "unspeakable" rich mercy which their God had offered to them.

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The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

April 9, 1987
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